

4 MASSIVE ROGUE ONE POSTERS!



EMPIRE



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COVER 2 OF 2
ORSON KRENNIC

FIRST LOOK:
JOHN WICK 2!
"THE ACTION IS
TAKEN UP A LEVEL"
— KEANU REEVES

**2016'S BEST
FILMS!**

**WITH THE STARS OF
DEADPOOL!
STRANGER THINGS!
WILDERPEOPLE!**

STAR WARS

ROGUE ONE

WORLD-BEATING ACCESS TO 2016'S MOST DANGEROUS MISSION



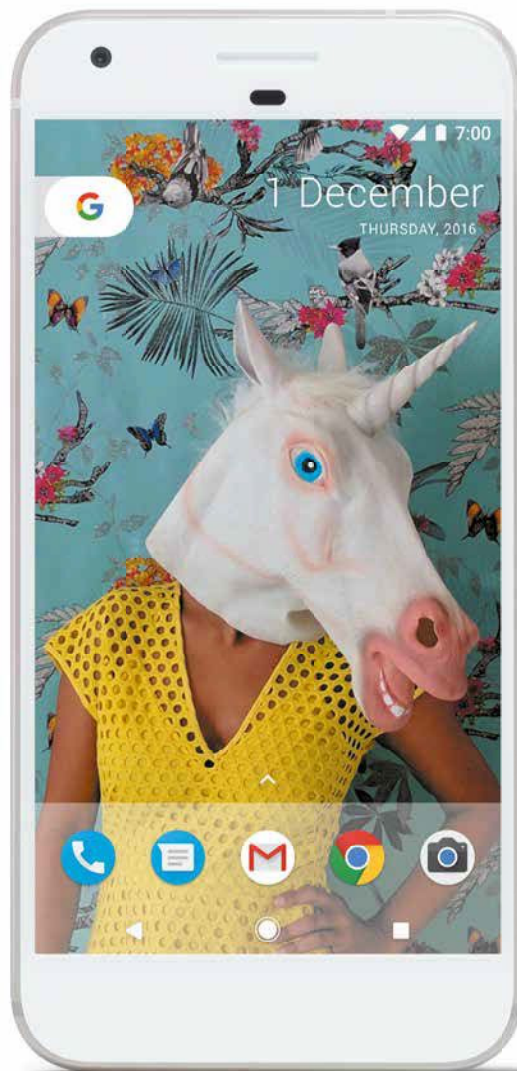
+ HITCHCOCK'S FINEST FILMS, RANKED • DONNIE DARKO • BATMAN



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DC CLASSICS ORIGINAL MOVIE

HOLY NOSTALGIA BATMAN!

THE DYNAMIC
DUO ARE BACK!



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THIS MONTH AT EMPIRE

WHAT A YEAR. What an absolute belter of a year it's been. The terrifying lows, the dizzying highs, the creamy middles... 2016 has been a glorious shock-and-awe assault on our pleasure lobes from the moment we watched Leo wrasse a b'ar before we'd even sobered up from New Year's Eve. Here's some of our most memorable moments of 2016 in the *Empire* office — let us know yours, via empire@bauer-media.com.au, or on our Facebook page, /empireaust.

Most unintentionally hilarious moment: Oscar Isaac in his vastly over-produced blue costume in *X-Men: Apocalypse*, placing his hand on the TV set and growling, "Leeearning..." A super-powered rip-off of Leeloo learning history in *The Fifth Element*, but so much stupider — especially for a mutant who can read minds: why not have him "leeeearn" directly from brains?

Movie that least staff members got through: Normally our beery Friday arvo screening in the office DVD room is all hands on deck. But when we put on *Gods Of Egypt*, slowly everyone discovered they had other "urgent" things that needed doing. Only two hardy souls made it to the credits.

Most discussed movie: *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice*. Specifically: would it have been a better movie if it had ended half an hour sooner? Possibly. What exactly was Lex Luthor's plan with the Zod monster? Unclear. Was "Find... him... save... Martha" this year's "Ben... Dagobah... system"? Almost certainly. Every time you walked into the office, someone was rehashing what went wrong. But we're still amped for Affleck's Batman.

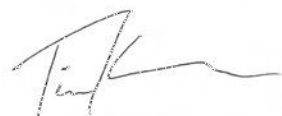
The film we told everyone to go watch: *Hunt For The Wilderpeople*. Friends, family, bartenders, bus drivers — for a month afterwards, we couldn't stop telling people to go watch it. If you haven't seen it yet: oh my god, you've got to go watch it. So good.

The film we told everyone to avoid: *Alice Through The Looking Glass*. Eesh.

The movie that most benefited from lowered expectations: *Ghostbusters*. Not a triumph by any stretch (balloon ghosts... why?) but not nearly as bad — not even in the same postcode of bad — as the mouth-frothing internet trolls wanted to believe. We came away with that same feeling after you lose control on a wet road but somehow skid safely into a legal carspace: breathless confused relief.

Moment that we're jiggling with excitement for: *Rogue One*. It's here! In a year filled with can't-wait flicks — *Deadpool*, *Jungle Book*, *Cap'n 'Merica: Civil War*, *Doctor Strange* — this is one of the most can't-waitiest. It's a new direction for the Star Wars universe, not just because it's outside the Episodes, but in the way it's conceived and shot — check out the trials and tribulations of shooting a large-scale sci-fi flick, cinema verite-style, from page 40. Get excited. And get ready for 2017. It's already shaping up to be the best year since, well, this year.

May none of your popcorn bits go down your gums,



TIM KEEN
EDITOR

"I sing Taylor Swift
in perfect symphony
to my acrobatic
yet alarmingly
emotional love-
making"
p.83

"We were always
dirty and wounded
... Things were
exploding in front
of us"
p.44

"Half the people I
knew died. You didn't
know if you were
going to die"
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**CLASSIC
LINES
OF THE
MONTH**

EMPIRE

(...and our favourite film of 2016)

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— Nigel Smith, The Guardian



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COMMENT



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

THANKS SO MUCH for the awesome tribute to Gene Wilder in the October issue. He was my all-time favourite comic actor and I don't think he ever made a bad movie – I even loved *Haunted Honeymoon*! It was great to relive all his best moments and I am going to re-watch *Young Frankenstein* tonight to celebrate. Cheers and RIP Gene Wilder.

TRENT EDWARDS, VIA EMAIL

Gene was certainly a hero around these parts, Trent. We even got to meet him in 2005. He gave us a scrumdiddlyumptious bar and everything!



EVERY letter printed this month scores a DVD of Western *The Duel*, starring Woody Harrelson and Aussie Liam Hemsworth.

D'YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

I really enjoyed your feature last month (*Empire* #188) on the Oasis documentary *Supersonic*. I was lucky enough to be in the front row at Knebworth in 1996 and I had forgotten what a great time it was in England when Oasis were at their height. It was a time of optimism and a belief that anything was possible. Everything Oasis did made the news, from bust-ups to Liam's beard! I'll never forget being in a pub while the DJ played *Wonderwall*, and mid-song he turned off the track and everyone in the pub sang the rest. It was a goosebumps moment. I'm looking forward to seeing the movie and reliving the excitement. The music industry has changed so much that I don't think another band will match what they achieved or have the same effect on people. Live Forever!

JUSTIN FULLER, VIA EMAIL

Front row, Knebworth '96? That's pretty cool. And we agree — not enough rock bands punch each other these days. Your move, One Direction.

EMPIRE: BUNCH OF MUGGLES

By simply referring to the reporter of your (admittedly excellent) coverage of *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* (*Empire* #188) as "He Who Must Not Be Named", I must congratulate him on his attempt at using the wizarding world's vernacular. "You Know Who", however, must have ingested a dizzying quantity of fermented pumpkin juice to mistakenly refer to the non-existent time-travelling capacities of Floo Powder. Forgive the pedantry, but perhaps the intended magical term was "Time Turning". Minor issues aside, though, the rest of the article is devoid of inaccuracies and full of valuable content. Which is more than can be said for the substance of the *Daily Prophet*.

DYLAN R., VIA EMAIL

We have no idea what this means, but out of sheer fear we'll say, "okay!"

SUPERHERO MOVIES: ALL PART OF THE BEAUTIFUL CIRCLE OF LIFE?

For an easygoing moviegoer, the recent superhero movie trend has got a lot of people frustrated with the amount of Marvel/DC/Fox/Sony films with spandex-wielding heroes in them. But this isn't entirely a bad thing. The late '70s and early



YES! FINALLY ABLE TO FIGURE OUT AN EMPIRE MAG SPINE QUOTE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS & GOT A REWARD. THANKS! @EMPIREAUST!

@ADELEKTHOMAS

'80s were saturated with science fiction movies, such as *Terminator*, *Alien* and *Star Wars*. The '90s saw a rise in gritty action movies and thrillers such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Silence Of The Lambs* and *Fight Club*. The 2000s served us an unhealthy amount of 3D-animated movies that fit the trend, as Pixar and Disney took over the movie industry with hits galore such as *The Incredibles*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Monsters, Inc.* Now it's the turn of the superhero movie genre to sit in centre stage. The trend began in 2008 and is still growing strong. So embrace the superhero movie trend. We may only just be beginning.

CHRIS CHARLTON, VIA EMAIL

An interesting take on the cycle of movie trends and genres, Chris, although we'd probably argue that the current crop of superhero films probably kicked off with Bryan Singer's *X-Men* in 2000. What do you reckon, *Empire* readers? Are superhero flicks here to stay, or have they almost had their day? Flick us a letter!

GROW UP, TOM CRUISE!

Well done slipping all those Lee Child book titles into the text of your 'Second Shot' article in October's issue (I caught nine)... but Tom Cruise is still not Jack Reacher. Even if he grew another foot, Reacher hates driving and isn't very good at it — a chink in his superhero facade that helps make him real.

ALEXIA RUSSELL, AUCKLAND, NZ

Perhaps Tom's platform shoes aren't quite platform-y enough?



NEVER GO BACK

Dear *Empire*, as a huge Jack Reacher fan, I wanted to say I really enjoyed the October feature on the quite decent Reacher sequel, *Never Go Back*. While reading though, I started to wonder if I was imagining it, OR, having read and loved all twenty of Lee Child's pulp adventures, was I noticing something very cheeky that wordsmith Chris Hewitt was doing. Did he manage to secretly slip the book titles into the article?! Well played good sir, that was quite the Easter Egg(s)! Now that I've shown how clever I am, award me letter of the month please and thank you. If that's not enough, here's proof I deserve it in the form of a picture of my *Empire* collection. Yes, I have been on board for all sixteen years. Here's to sixteen more!

ROD ADDAMO, DALLAS, VIC

Er, we have already awarded the letter of the month and, unfortunately, we can never go back. Ahem. Kudos to your sweet collection, though!

EMPIRE DOES NOT AWAKEN

As I was having a happy scroll through the review section of *Empire*'s November issue, I noticed in the *Queen Of Katwe* review that you listed Lupita Nyong'o as having her first onscreen role since *12 Years A Slave* in 2013. Must I be mad, but wasn't she in *Non-Stop* and the biggest movie of last year: *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*? Better stop with the afternoon naps I dare say, *Empire*.

DENNIS HUI, ALLAWAH, NSW

Dare we say that you're half-right, Dennis: yep she was in Non-Stop, but you could argue it's only her voice, not her face, that graces The Force Awakens. Regardless, there's no way we're giving up our afternoon naps...

IN THE LAB WITH EMPIRE

Hey *Empire*! Thanks for the read every month! Keep up the good work, keep experimenting. 'Kids Watch Classics' and 'Story Of The Shot' are columns I really look forward to!

CHRIS PEARSON, KELLYVILLE, NSW

Cheers Chris! For our next unholy experiment, we will be doing nothing but following John Travolta wherever he goes for a brand new column titled 'Look Who's Stalking'.



THE GIBSONAISSANCE?

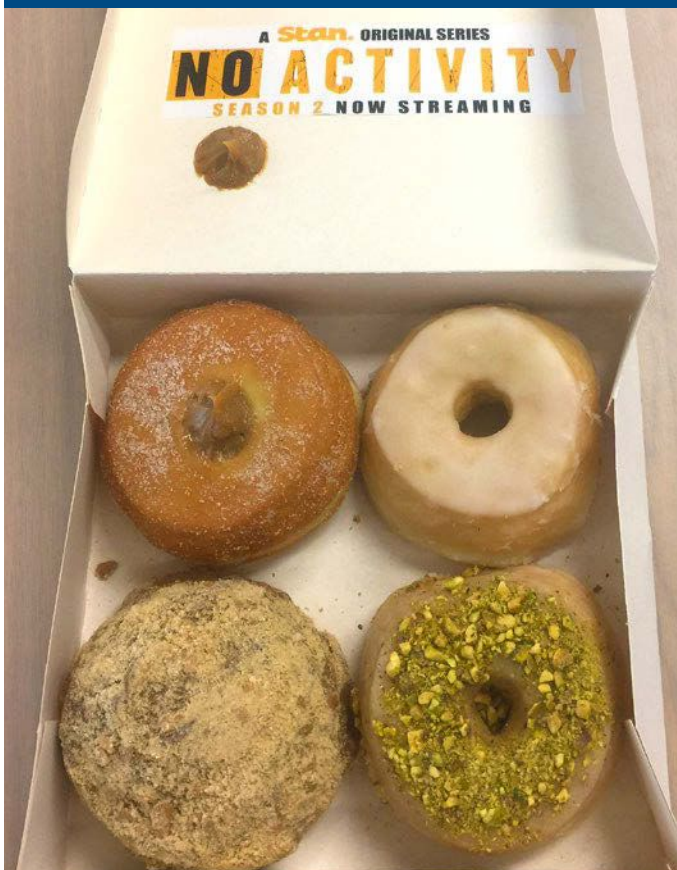
After deciding he'd start choosing better roles after a string of truly shit films, Matthew McConaughey's career second wind was gifted the rather lovely moniker 'The McConaissance'. After witnessing Mel Gibson kick arse and take names in the rather excellent *Blood Father*, as well as his brilliant directorial effort with the recent *Hacksaw Ridge* (seriously — what a great

movie!), can we perhaps gift Gibson with 'The Gibsonaissance'? Yes he's done some very stupid and hurtful things, but isn't it time we let Mad Mel back into our lives? There are other actors and directors who've done far worse than him.

SIMON FALLOWS, VIA EMAIL

We might respectfully stay out of this and let you guys settle it. Whaddya reckon: is it The Gibsonaissance, or is Movie Star Jail Mel's spot?

IN THE OFFICE THIS MONTH



Part of the greatness of working at *Empire* is that this kinda thing sometimes happens: we get sweet, sweet donuts delivered to our door (these courtesy of No Activity Season 2). Thanks for the fattening!

SPINE QUOTE HONOUR ROLE

SPINE QUOTE #188

"The Bureau Of Paranormal Research And Defense is born."

THE FILM

Hellboy (2004)

THE CONNECTION

Said by John Hurt who's Ollivander in the Harry Potter films.

THE WINNER

Neville Hughes

THE REWARD

An *Empire* cap for you! Send answers to empire@bauer-media.com.au





PRE.VIEW

PULSE-QUICKENING MOVIE AND TV NEWS

EDITED BY NICK DE SEMLYEN

> ROBERT DOWNEY JR TO DIRECT TV DRAMA *SINGULARITY* > SAMUEL L JACKSON JOINS *BRIE*

ON-SET
EXCLUSIVE

PASSENGERS

OUT 1 JANUARY

STARSHIP VOYAGERS

Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt
on a space date

WORDS IAN FREER



Clockwise from left: Mechanic Jim (Chris Pratt) does a bit of tinkering; Jim gets tender with author Aurora (Jennifer Lawrence); Director Morten Tyldum gives direction to Pratt; Jim congratulates bartender Arthur (Michael Sheen) on his coffee-making.

CHRIS PRATT IS singing Salt-N-Pepa's *Push It* and popping moves until director Morten Tyldum (*The Imitation Game*) orders him back to work with Jennifer Lawrence. "Usually [actors] come in for three hours a day and get Thursdays off," Pratt laughs. "Here I'm like, 'I have to be here the whole day? In every shot? Fuck this.'"

It's day 47 of the Atlanta shoot and *Empire* is playing gooseberry on the first date of writer Aurora (Lawrence) and mechanic Jim (Pratt) while genial bartender Arthur (Michael Sheen) serves drinks. But their Art Deco bar is aboard a spaceship taking 5,000 people in hibernation pods on a one-way, 120-year journey to a new colony, and Arthur is a legless android.

The problem is, Jim and Aurora have awoken 90 years early. The pair will face disasters man-made and natural — Pratt has already shot 'zero-G' wire work that "was cool for about five minutes, then it was the hardest physical work I've ever had to do". But that's not the only reason it's tough for the stars — carrying a whole film is hard.

"I didn't want [another] big movie, so I almost didn't read it," says Lawrence. "I've never wanted to say no to a movie more. But I couldn't stop thinking about it. It's such a beautiful love story."

And the stars' screen chemistry is palpable. So is Lawrence's presence as a creative dynamo, trying different line-readings and gags. "You think you have an idea of who somebody is but she was a monster," deadpans Pratt. "I was expecting she was going to be really cool and funny, and she is all those things and more."

Passengers had its own long journey to the screen. Jon Spaihts (*Doctor Strange*) wrote the spec script in 2007, but it never quite reached production. "It's like a big beautiful house in the Hollywood Hills," explains Pratt. "Everybody wants that house but most people can't afford it so it might be on the market for a while. The small version of this movie would be cool, but it's not going to be even close to what this is going to be because we can do it right. And because we have Jennifer Lawrence."



THE BOY FROM MARS

Director Peter Chelsom explains how *The Space Between Us* harks back to '80s classics

WORDS HELEN O'HARA

"I HAVE KIDS, so I have to sit through a lot of crap," says director Peter Chelsom. "Do you ever go to see those films that 10-year-olds go to see? It's like two hours in an ashtray. You're just exhausted. [But] when I read this script I went, 'This is the kind of movie Robert Zemeckis would have made in the 1980s,' and I thought, 'Well, that's great.'"

The script that so impressed the *Serendipity* director was *The Space Between Us*, a science-fiction story about Gardner Elliot (Asa Butterfield), a boy born on a scientific mission to Mars. His astronaut mother dies in childbirth and, too small to survive take-off and a return to Earth, he grows up surrounded by scientists on the Red Planet. It's only as a teenager that he gets the chance to visit his true home — but there are doubts his heart, accustomed to Mars' lower gravity, can keep him alive back on Earth.

The film isn't aimed at Chelsom's 10-year-old, necessarily, but he wanted it to be something that would entertain all ages. "It's the balance between that massive scope and that good, strong heart," says Chelsom. "It has a nice theme

to it. It seems to me it's about isolation and connection, amplified by the vastness of space."

While Mars is the backdrop for the story, much of it takes place back on Earth. And as Gardner is seeing everything for the very first time, you need a relatable actor who can convey a sense of wonder. That's where Butterfield — already a veteran of thoughtful sci-fi in *Ender's Game* — proved key. "Asa just has such a natural curiosity in his face. There's an absolutely innate naivety about him that works. He's very unto himself, odd in a good way. I pushed him into quite a bit of range in this movie; you can even see it in the trailer. I found the comedian in him and the romantic in him. He's lovely."

Even before arriving on Earth, Gardner had been busy online and befriended Tulsa (Britt Robertson — another sci-fi veteran thanks to *Tomorrowland*), a girl his own age who's unaware of his origins. With her help he sets off on a road trip across the US in search of the father he has never known. "Britt is really feisty and just a strong woman," explains Chelsom. "You see this arc that Tulsa goes [on]. [At first] she's the foster child that's really defensive and very brittle, then you see this softening, because she's always on the attack and he completely disarms her by being gentle and neutral. [Britt] is a terrific actress; she directs herself really, really well."

Providing veteran support are Gary Oldman as the NASA director responsible for the Mars programme ("God, it's nice to have a Brit on

the set, someone who gets the fucking joke") and Carla Gugino ("always, always wonderful") as one of the Mars-based scientists who raises Gardner. The film shot at Sir Richard Branson's Spaceport America in New Mexico, in an effort to ensure a real-world feel to the sci-fi. "My rule about CGI is, let's always try to make it feasible," explains Chelsom. "I often make the camera angles, say, look like actual little cameras that would be attached to the side of the rocket, with Mars in the background."

The final cut may be reminiscent of films such as *Flight Of The Navigator*, *D.A.R.Y.L.* or *The Explorers*, but it's no mere rehash, says Chelsom. "It's not that I copy or emulate other directors. I'm very unto myself and I've had a strange career. So I do admire Zemeckis but I didn't channel him. It's about range and pace. That's what I love about *The Space Between Us*: it's various films at once. It's heavy action and sci-fi and at times it feels like a sweet, low-budget romance. And there's nothing massively produced about it. I think that kind of undulating thing is what people miss. It's films that don't overwhelm you with noise; they don't do it by bombarding you, but with heart." It's ironic that the film's love story is threatened by its hero's weak heart. But signs are that's the only heart that's lacking.

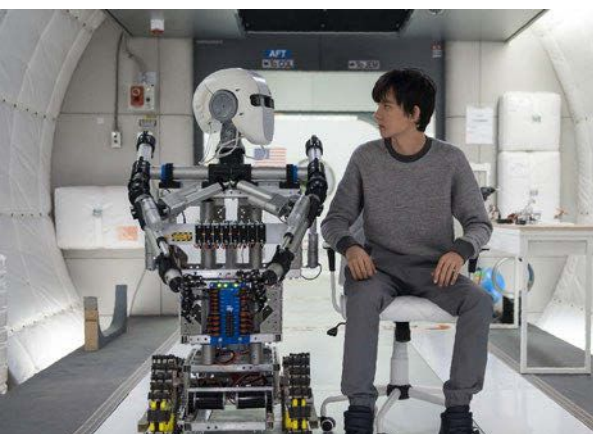
THE SPACE BETWEEN US IS IN CINEMAS FROM 16 FEBRUARY 2017

> FOREST WHITAKER JOINS JOHNNY DEPP IN TUPAC CRIME DRAMA LABYRINTH > AARON



Here: Tulsa (Britt Robertson) and Gardner Elliot (Asa Butterfield) are floating on air.

Below: Gary Oldman's NASA director looking a little Richard Branson-esque; Butterfield and an AI; Butterfield suits up.



Above: Villainous ghost Pirate Captain Salazar (Javier Bardem).

Here: Jack Sparrow is a wanted man (again).



RATED AAARRRRR

Your need-to-know update on the fifth instalment in the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* franchise

WORDS HELEN O'HARA

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS ITS TITLE?

This is a surprisingly tough question. In America and Australia, it's officially *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*, but in the United Kingdom it will be subtitled *Salazar's Revenge*. And in France, Spain, Italy and a few other countries it's slightly different again, going by *The Revenge Of Salazar*. Perhaps all these aliases are useful to conceal its piratical identity — or it could be down to a conflict with the BBC documentary *Dead Men Tell No Tales*.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Well, we can deduce that Javier Bardem's Captain Salazar, the "deadly ghost pirate" — them again — who looks like a drowned man in the teaser trailer, is out for revenge on his nemesis, Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp). Salazar and his men have escaped the 'Devil's Triangle' (the devil lives in Bermuda?) and Cap'n Jack must race him to

the Trident Of Poseidon to prevent him gaining control of the seas.

ISN'T ORLANDO BLOOM BACK?

Yes — after sitting out the fourth film Bloom will once again be playing Will Turner. An unguarded remark about his son suggests that his baby with Keira (who we saw in the post-credit sting of *Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End*) is all grown up and looking for his father — and everyone suspects Brenton Thwaites's Henry is Turner Jr. Chances are Henry will be romancing Kaya Scodelario's astronomer, Carina — who in one version of the script was Captain Barbosa's (Geoffrey Rush) daughter.

WHO'S DIRECTING?

Half of Hollywood was rumoured for the job, including original *Pirates Of The Caribbean: The Curse Of The Black Pearl* director Gore Verbinski and Depp regular Tim Burton. But it was Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg, the Norwegian directors of tense ocean drama *Kon-Tiki*, who landed the job, shooting in Australia last year.

ANY FAMOUS MUSICAL CAMEOS?

While Keith Richard expressed an interest in reprising his role as Captain Teague, there has been no official confirmation of that. But more surprisingly, there are rumours that Paul McCartney may appear. Well, he does live in a yellow submarine...

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES IS IN CINEMAS FROM 25 MAY 2017

ECKHART WON'T RETURN FOR *ANGEL HAS FALLEN* > HBO'S *WESTWORLD* RENEWED FOR SEASON 2



OFF THE WALL

Auteur Zhang Yimou's new historical Chinese epic stars Matt Damon. Why?

WORDS OWEN WILLIAMS

DOMINATING THE POSTERS for *The Great Wall*, Zhang Yimou's latest Chinese historical fantasy epic, is the unlikely face of Matt Damon. And behind the scenes is a writing team that includes *Bourne* screenwriter Tony Gilroy, *World War Z* creator Max Brooks and Hollywood writer/director Ed Zwick (who took Tom Cruise to Japan for *The Last Samurai*). Concerns of 'whitewashing' rumbled in opinion pieces and across social media in the wake of the

marketing campaign's earliest salvos, but for the director, the issue isn't one that's especially significant.

"I like how naturalistic his performances are," shrugs the director of his star. "Why not seize the opportunity to work with him?"

The Great Wall's narrative does call for a Western face to be a part of the proceedings — unlike Zhang's all-Chinese films *Hero* or *House Of Flying Daggers*. But the director sees this less as a crowbarred interloper and more an opportunity. Zhang had originally wanted to cast Damon in the Christian Bale role in 2011's *The Flowers Of War* before scheduling clashes prevented that collaboration, and now he has another chance. The story is a culture clash between the individualism and instinct for self-preservation of Damon's mercenary, and

what Zhang sees as the "Eastern group mentality" of Chinese soldiers willing to sacrifice themselves for a greater good. "Matt's perspective and worldview changes: he's moved by the soldiers' dedication," explains the director. "That was important to me, and I wanted to make sure it was understood."

The film's sheer size is one more reason to cast Damon. "A big-budget film like this needed someone like him for a worldwide audience," explains Zhang. "Unfortunately, even the biggest Chinese stars can't break a film out internationally, whereas Matt is famous everywhere."

It's Zhang's involvement that is, in a way, unprecedented in what is largely a Hollywood film. Universal and Legendary are the studios providing the principal finance, but the director

> CLINT MANSELL TO SCORE *GHOST IN THE SHELL* > MATT DAMON AND LIAM NEESON TO



Clockwise from left: Monster magic: will the Great Wall be able to hold back an army of evil dragon-like creatures hellbent on destruction?; Mercenary Matt Damon is armed and ready for battle; Zhang Yimou gives direction to Damon.



creatively views it as “a pure Chinese story that happens to have Western characters”. It isn’t based on an existing folktale, but does feature traditional folk-monsters the Taotie: dragon-like creatures of unrivalled ravenousness that threaten the entire country if the Great Wall cannot hold them back. It’s the sort of terrifying beast that justifies the recruitment of foreigners — a team that also includes characters played by Pedro Pascal and Willem Dafoe, working with the Chinese forces led by Jing Tian, Andy Lau and Zhang Hanyu.

The director finds it incredible that nobody has ever told a story about defending the Great Wall against an army of monsters before. “It took several centuries and a team of Western writers to hit on the concept,” he laughs. “But even though it’s a monster movie, the basics

had to be correct.” Zhang’s involvement began three years ago with the meticulous weeding of the script for cultural inaccuracies. The rise of the Chinese film audience (now the second-largest market in the world) was a major impetus behind the project, but Zhang says that for Legendary “to hire somebody who doesn’t speak English at all to direct an English film is still a pretty big gamble”, especially since *The Great Wall* is officially the biggest film ever made in China. The budget is said to be \$135 million, and since filming on the Great Wall itself is forbidden, large sections had to be reconstructed near the coastal city of Qingdao. Even with CG extensions, this was no small undertaking.

Though he was working with Western stars in a foreign language, Zhang was on home turf and says that he felt perfectly at ease. But this

is not the start of a new career in English-language filmmaking. The process of making a Hollywood film, he says, took twice the time Zhang would normally need, even if he did find the test-screening process valuable in helping the film “play” to audiences from different cultures. And fans of his earlier *wuxia* hits *Hero* and *House Of Flying Daggers* needn’t worry that Hollywood meddling or a Western star has muted the director’s signature look. “We have a scene with Matt on the wall figuring out what colour goes with what regiment. It’s like he’s analysing a Zhang Yimou film!” Zhang laughs. “I’m known for choreographed action and colour. I can’t deviate from that.”

THE GREAT WALL IS IN CINEMAS FROM 16 FEBRUARY 2017

STAR IN UNTITLED MOTORSPORTS RACING THRILLER > THE CROODS 2 CANCELLED

FIRST LOOK
EXCLUSIVE

CHURCHILL

OUT TBC 2017

THE HISTORY MAKER

Brian Cox gives an old bulldog new tricks

WORDS SIMON CROOK

GIVEN PORTRAYALS OF Churchill are way beyond dart-score figures, you'd think there was little left to say about Britain's jowly leader. Well, think again. Set during the 48 hours leading up to D-Day, Jonathan Teplitzky's time-bomb drama bunkers down in Downing Street's War Room where Churchill faced a battle on three fronts: the Nazi war machine, his own obdurate generals and an internal conflict with debilitating depression. With the mighty Brian Cox as its lead, this promises to recast a mythical figure in all-too-human form.

"What we've uncovered flies in the face of public perception," says Teplitzky. "Many people will be shocked to hear Churchill was in total opposition to D-Day. He feared Operation Overlord would be another Gallipoli."

Joined by a stellar ensemble including Miranda Richardson as Clemmie Churchill, James Purefoy as King George VI and Ella Purnell as Churchill's secretary, Cox looks, sounds and waddles like the real thing.

"Churchill was an MP in my home town [*Dundee*], so this is a role of a lifetime," he says. "He was an astonishingly complex character. He could be volatile, funny, a drunk, a rascal, often a big baby, but also a genius and a man of destiny. This isn't about Churchill the icon — it's about the man."



> EDGAR RAMIREZ JOINS WILL SMITH IN DAVID AYER'S *BRIGHT* > PENELOPE CRUZ BOARDING



"We shall fight on the beaches... after this cigar"

PREVIEW



Gary Oldman,
playing an old man.

THE OTHER CHURCHILL

Typical: you wait ages for a Churchill movie, and then two come along at once

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

WINSTON CHURCHILL HAS been played by British thespians from Albert Finney to Michael Gambon and soon Brian Cox, but never with quite the dedication to physical verisimilitude of *Darkest Hour*'s Gary Oldman. Yes, this is Gary Oldman. Honest.


Joe Wright's (*Atonement*, *Pride & Prejudice*) latest dramatises the early days of Churchill's Prime Ministership. With the Wehrmacht stomping across Europe and Hitler at his most bullish, the nation's leader was left with a stark choice: negotiate a humiliating peace with Germany, or dig in and fight back. Churchill sat back, lit a cigar and said, "I'll take option B."

Except, of course, the reality was much less straightforward. As Anthony McCarten's script will chart, the strain was enormous and he lent heavily on the support of his stalwart wife Clementine (Kristin Scott Thomas). Ben Mendelsohn and John Hurt star as King George VI and ex-PM Neville Chamberlain respectively.

"*Darkest Hour* is about a visionary leader who stood firm in the face of tremendous pressure to abandon his unique point of view on the world," explains Focus Features boss Peter Kujawski, "so it is fitting that his story will be told by these visionary filmmakers."

**DARKEST HOUR IS IN CINEMAS
FROM 18 JANUARY**

KENNETH BRANAGH'S *MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS* > DEAN DEVLIN TO DIRECT *COUNTDOWN*



DRESSED TO KILL

Yeah, we're thinking he's back. Keanu's contract killer returns in *John Wick: Chapter 2*

WORDS JAMES DYER

THE JOHN WICK Kill Counter on YouTube allows you to re-live every fatal shot, stab, snap and boom of the 2014 film's 101 pulverising minutes. They killed his dog, they stole his beloved '69 Mustang and, in response, Keanu Reeves's retired contract killer put a grand total of 76 Russian mobsters in the ground.

"That number's a little light," corrects

director Chad Stahelski. "I saw that video, but they forgot to count the guys in the various SUVs he crashed and blew up. If you include them then it's actually 84."

Shot for just \$20 million, *John Wick* raked in a respectable \$130 million worldwide and showed a hard-edged, ass-kicking side of Reeves that has been largely absent since 1999's *The Matrix* — where Stahelski worked as Reeves's stunt double. *John Wick: Chapter 2* picks up almost immediately after the first film, with Wick bloodied and beaten, 84 bodies in his wake and a new mutt at his heel. Rather than continue Wick's vengeful rampage over another outrage (a stolen parking space, perhaps, or a lukewarm latte) the sequel broadens both mythology and

canvas. Stahelski (this time without *John Wick* co-director David Leitch) takes us deeper into the otherworldly sub-culture of Ian McShane's hitman hotel, The Continental, while at the same time transporting much of the gunplay from New York to Rome.

"The first film's about fate; this one is about consequence," says the director. "If he hadn't done what he did in the first movie, he wouldn't have reactivated his old life, which causes a ripple effect and makes an old acquaintance knock on his door and say, 'Since you're back, I need you to kill someone.'"

That acquaintance is Riccardo Scamarcio's Santino, who pulls Wick into a civil war between members of a Roman crime family. Cue guns,

> THE ACCOUNTANT DIRECTOR GAVIN O'CONNOR MAKING A NEW GREEN HORNET MOVIE



Clockwise from left: John Wick (Keanu Reeves) is back on the warpath; Santino (Riccardo Scamarcio) with Ares (Ruby Rose); Pigeon fancier The Bowery King (Laurence Fishburne, who hasn't worked with Reeves since *The Matrix Revolutions* back in 2003).

lots of guns, as Wick takes on half the Italian underworld, including Santino's private army, led by head of security Ares (*Orange Is The New Black*'s Ruby Rose).

As with the first film, *Chapter 2* eschews the staccato editing of Greengrass and his imitators, opting instead for gloriously wide master shots in the traditional Hong Kong style. Drawing on classic gun-fu cinema from the likes of John Woo and Wong Jing, the sequel takes much of the heavy lifting out of the cutting room, instead relying on the physical skills of the film's immaculately tailored star.

"If you're using fast editing to hide things, then I call bullshit: that's cheating," says Stahelski. "Luckily we have an actor who can do

this stuff for real. Keanu's been doing martial arts for 25 years, so we just don't teach him a few moves and shout, 'Action!' We've had him doing judo, sambo, jiu-jitsu; we had him learn from the best tactical three-gun shooter in the world, train with SEALs and SWAT. Then we put him in front of the camera, pass him a gun and let him show what he can do."

A key face-off in a mirrored art installation sees a bloodied Wick trade flurries of blows with Ares, strikingly attired in purple velvet. "The mirror room was Chad's idea," says Reeves. "It's his homage to Bruce Lee at the end of *Enter The Dragon*. The whole installation is a maze of mirrors where guys can pop out and disappear. It's very cool and a lot of fun to fight in. The

action in this one is taken up a level. It's like going back to your favourite restaurant but this time, instead of getting the fillet, you're getting the porterhouse."

A bloody meat metaphor seems appropriate for a film that hopes to repeat the success of its ultra-violent predecessor and, if fans get their wish, rack up an even larger bodycount than before. After all, Wick may have replaced the dog, but that still leaves at least one piece of unfinished business.

"Oh, he's back," says Reeves, with a grin. "I don't think it's giving away too much to say he's still going to go get his car."

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 IS IN CINEMAS TBC 2017

> FEDE ALVAREZ CONFIRMED TO DIRECT *THE GIRL IN THE SPIDER'S WEB* WITH ROONEY MARA

THE DEBATE

ARE PREQUELS EVER A GOOD IDEA?

Amid rumours that George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road* sequel is in fact a prequel focused on Charlize Theron's Furiosa, we ask whether that's really the best plan

ILLUSTRATIONS DAVID MAHONEY



YES
OLLY RICHARDS,
CONTRIBUTOR

DISMISSING ENTIRE CATEGORIES

of film is getting very boring. Once, sequels were considered lazy and terrible. Then it was remakes. Then it was reboots. Now it's prequels. These complaints go on until enough good examples are made to kill the argument. The popular 'name one sequel better than the original' argument died years ago because there are now far too many. As for reboots, remember when that *Mad Max* reset, without Mel Gibson, seemed a shaky prospect? The only thing that matters with a Furiosa prequel is that it has a compelling story. Any other theoretical gripes are meaningless and childish.

The most common complaint about prequels is that they strip away the mystery. "I don't need

everything to be explained! I don't want to know what's already happened, I want to know what happens next!" This makes little sense. Whether sequel or prequel, you're just filling in more unknowns in a character's life. That's what storytelling is, and if a new story looks backward or forward really makes little difference.

With a prequel, you effectively know 'the end' of the movie, in as much as you know the lead character won't die or will end up in a particular place, but a story is not just its end. Many movies start by telling you the end. We knew Joe Gillis wasn't going to live to the end of *Sunset Boulevard*. Every single biopic is a sequel. It's the journey that matters, and by deciding that a prequel will be automatically bad, we are assuming that our power to imagine a character's backstory is better than its creator's ability to actually tell it.

We know relatively little about Furiosa. We know she was stolen from her original home. We know she has one arm. We know she's a fucking badass. Do we *need* to know if she lost an arm or was born that way? Nope, and who's to say a prequel will answer that? To know more about

how she became the warrior she is, if there's a terrific story to it, doesn't somehow lessen her power in *Fury Road*. If her previous adventures, which do not have to be an origin story in order to qualify as a prequel, are full of surprises and other characters as odd and intriguing, then bring it on. Let us trust that George Miller, the man who created Furiosa, knows a little better than his audience what makes a worthwhile Furiosa story.



NO
HELEN O'HARA,
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

HERE IS A LIST of pure prequels that were as successful as the original, without undermining it: 1) ... That's right. There are none. And that's because prequels don't work. People cite *The Godfather Part II*, but that's half-sequel.



> JURASSIC WORLD STAR LAUREN LAPKUS TO JOIN CAST OF WILL FERRELL'S HOLMES AND



Will a *Furiosa* (Charlize Theron) backstory be a journey too far?

By offering the next chapter alongside the backstory, Francis Ford Coppola sidestepped the great pitfall of the prequel: the fact that the narrative already reached a satisfactory ending. But let's not kid ourselves: that's a sequel with glorified flashbacks.

There are prequels, such as *Fast 5*, *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* and *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, which are technically set before an original film but ignore that fact almost entirely. And what's the point, aside from resurrecting Han Seoul-Oh? If you called those sequels, little or nothing would change — so why not just make a sequel?

Many prequels undermine or confuse the original. In the first category go all the sympathetic backstories for iconic villains: the *Star Wars* prequels, *Hannibal Rising* and *Maleficent* (that's also a sequel). In the second, put the *X-Men* prequels, which trashed the chronology of the original trio out of the canon entirely. *Pan* and *Prometheus* make both mistakes.

What sets prequels apart from sequels, reboots and the rest is that their story's been told. They don't expand our love of the original

because they don't truly expand on its story; there's nothing satisfying in knowing how someone reached their unsatisfactory starting position before their grand adventure. The *Star Wars* prequels led the most beloved and successful films of all time into a decade of fanboy disdain; the best most prequels manage is a quiet agreement to pretend we never saw them.

So the rumours of a *Furiosa*-focused *Fury Road* prequel are worrisome. There was so much power in presenting that character fully formed and unapologetic. Audiences loved her strength, her determination, her lack of compromise, so do they really want to see the inevitable doubt and struggle to reach that point of resolve? If we are thrilled to see her strike back against the monstrous Immortan Joe, do we really want to see her at his mercy?

We can, of course, hope that the rumours are wrong; that Miller is preparing something more innovative (or sequel-y), or that he will produce the first prequel ever to live up to its progenitor. But the odds are against him. However much we trust George Miller, remember that we also trusted George Lucas.



HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER

Writer/director Stacy Title explains her formula for monster *The Bye Bye Man*

WORDS OWEN WILLIAMS

HAVE A STRONG CONCEPT

"Don't say it, don't think it," is the mantra behind her new film, *The Bye Bye Man*, about a supernatural entity who hunts and possesses its victims and makes them killers. "He's telepathic and he knows when you're thinking about him, and your fear makes him more powerful," Title explains.

CAST SMART

Playing the supernatural stalker is Doug Jones, used to monstrous make-up jobs thanks to regular gigs with Guillermo del Toro in *Pan's Labyrinth* and the *Hellboys*. "He can do more with his index finger than most people can do with their entire body," says Title. "He couldn't see well in the make-up, so he would step carefully around the set, then all of a sudden burst into life. There were crew who decided to be elsewhere whenever he was working."

LESS IS MORE

The idea that *The Bye Bye Man* is always approaching was key. "We didn't want to show him too much," Title says, "so there was a lot of concentration on what he looks like as a hooded figure in the distance." Title also opted for a psychological approach over excess gore. "When the Bye Bye Man touches your forehead he can show you the pain he's going to cause: something you're most afraid of," she explains. "It's trippy."

DON'T JUST COPY THE BEST

The pantheon of movie monsters, from Dracula to Freddy Krueger, makes it hard to be original, but Title was clear what she didn't want. "I didn't want him to be quippy or especially violent," she tells *Empire*. What's scary is that he can turn victims into killers. The real horror is in us.

**THE BYE BYE MAN IS IN CINEMAS
TBC 2017**



FAMILY MISFORTUNE

Unfortunate? Not at all. The most twisted kids books ever get the Netflix treatment

WORDS OLLY RICHARDS

IF YOU PLAN to watch *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* with small children, please check first that there is space to hide behind the sofa. Assuming director Barry Sonnenfeld and star Neil Patrick Harris have done their job, the eight-part Netflix series — all dropping at once in January — will be one of those TV shows that makes people pleasantly shudder at its memory long after they've progressed to adulthood, like *Doctor Who*, or *Mulligrubs*.

The novel series by Daniel Handler on which the show is based tells the dark tale of the Baudelaire children, Violet (Malina Weissman), Klaus (Louis Hynes) and baby Sunny, orphaned when their parents are killed in a fire. To make a bad situation worse, they are sent to live with their distant cousin Count Olaf (Harris), who dedicates every minute to elaborate schemes to rob them of their considerable inheritance and, if it

should serve his purposes, their lives.

"We establish very early how bad this guy is," says Harris. "He makes the kids cook dinner, and drunkenly berates them while they're doing all they can. Then he slaps Klaus across the face and knocks him to the floor. That's dark! And there's no apology for it... That's a lot for a kid-centric show to not explain, but it's important. We have to show why these kids don't leave. It's because they're so scared."

To find the right level of fun/fear, Harris looked back to a film that both delighted and scared him out of his own tiny child mind. "*Gene Wilder in Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*," he says. "I was thinking a lot about those scenes at the end when he takes Charlie and Grandpa Joe into his office, and he screams at Charlie. That, to me, was a little bit of Olaf, just that sense of, 'I will fuckin' snap.' There's

something hypnotic about it."

Like the Jim Carrey-starring film adaptation of 2004, however, this isn't horror. There is also lightness. It's not for nothing that Sonnenfeld, who so successfully married the kooky and the altogether ooky with *The Addams Family*, is directing. While Olaf is a cruel monster, he is also an idiot, an actor of astonishingly little talent who believes himself a genius and uses absurd disguises to carry out his schemes. "I spent a lot of time in costume acting as Olaf acting as someone else," says Harris. "That brought its own set of confusions. I, Neil, wanted to be good to show I am a man of many characters. But Olaf is not a good actor, and I have to respect that."

So be warned: it may not only be the murderous schemes that are horrifying. You may also be subject to some (deliberately) terrifyingly bad acting.

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS IS ON NETFLIX FROM 13 JANUARY 2017



Above: Lemony Snicket (Neil Patrick Harris) charms Violet (Malina Weissman) and Klaus (Louis Hynes). **Here:** Baby Sunny joins the party.



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5 TIPS: HOW TO GET SCREENED AT TROPFEST

Tropfest director John Polson shows how to impress for the world's biggest short film festival

WORDS TIM KEEN

"FILMS ARE REALLY the heartbeat of Tropfest," says the short film festival's founder and director John Polson. "What makes a great film for us is originality. It's the ability to just tell a great story." February 11 marks the 25th Tropfest, which is now the world's largest short film festival. "We've had some fantastic short films. I saw a film one year, it had the title *The Film*, so this title fades up and it looks like it's going to be the greatest movie ever, fade to black and then a minute of credits. And that's it. It gave us all a good laugh."

An original idea, even if it's harebrained,

beats something derivative — so don't just copy previous years' films. "We've had all kinds. We had a film once, a few years ago, with someone dressed up as me, and they abducted me and put a bag over my head — that's how they got away with it, frankly I thought physically it was a little insulting, but anyway — it was about kidnapping me as the festival director and beating the crap out of me and kicking me with a bag over my head, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry."

Here John Polson shares his tips for a successful Tropfest entry...

1 Make it for a big crowd

"With a big outdoor event like Tropfest, comedy can work really well. It doesn't have to be a comedy, but with a big crowd, getting them laughing can be a great thing." Remember that laughter is infectious, especially in big crowds.

"Having said that, the other side to that coin is a really serious film where you can hear a pin drop in 90 thousand people — that can have a real impact. I've seen that happen, where you can't believe how many people are there and no one is even taking a breath, watching a drama unfold."

> WONG KAR WAI TO HELM GUCCI FAMILY DRAMA > THE WITCH DIRECTOR ROBERT EGGERS TO



Clockwise from left: A Tropicfest crowd gets ready for the show to begin; John Polson with Mel Gibson and Rebecca Gibney; Simon Baker at Tropicfest 2016.

2 Don't forget to include the signature item
 "This year it's pineapple. Usually the team goes out and has a boozy lunch the day after Tropicfest, and invariably we end up talking about next year and what the item is going to be. Pineapple is pretty significant because it all started at the Tropicana Café, it has a tropical flavour, and pineapple was always part of our visual language in our posters and our trophies, but we've never had pineapple as the signature item. So someone much smarter than me threw it out there and I jumped on it, it was perfect."

3 Keep it short
 "I think keeping it short is really important. A lot of filmmakers see that there's a seven minute limit, and I can't tell you how many films I've watched that are six minutes and 59 seconds, and then you watch it and you say, 'you know what? It could have been a lot shorter and it would have been a hell of a lot better.' You've got to be brutal in the editing room, I think anyone who's made any movie whether it's features or shorts will tell you, you've really got to be your own toughest critic. There's a danger you fall in love with your own material because you were there and you know how hard it was to get it, and how much fun you were having on the day... You get attached and you bring all that emotional baggage to the editing room. But the truth is, the audience doesn't know you, they don't know your actors, they don't know what you went through, they don't really care what you

went through, they just want to be told a great story. So I think being as brief and economical as you can be is a good thing."

4 Get the best actors you can
 "Obviously great performances are key. Mediocre acting can really take you out of a story." Okay, you're probably not going to be able to cast professional-grade actors, but getting actors with even a small amount of experience will do better than roping in the blokes from the pub.

5 Sound matters... and you don't have to spend a fortune on equipment
 "Great sound is really important, almost more important than great pictures. I've noticed over the years at Tropicfest, if the image is a bit fuzzy or a bit pixelated, people will go with it if it's got good sound. But if the images are beautiful and you can't hear the dialogue properly, people will completely switch off. What's more frustrating than not hearing what the characters are saying to each other?"

You don't even need to have a professional camera set-up to enter. "I've seen some great films made with a mobile phone — maybe they don't blow up and look like the greatest quality when they're on a big screen, but if the sound is good they'll keep your attention for sure."

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A FILM TO TROPICFEST IS FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER. FOR MORE DETAILS AND ENTRY FORMS, GO TO WWW.TROPICFEST.ORG.AU

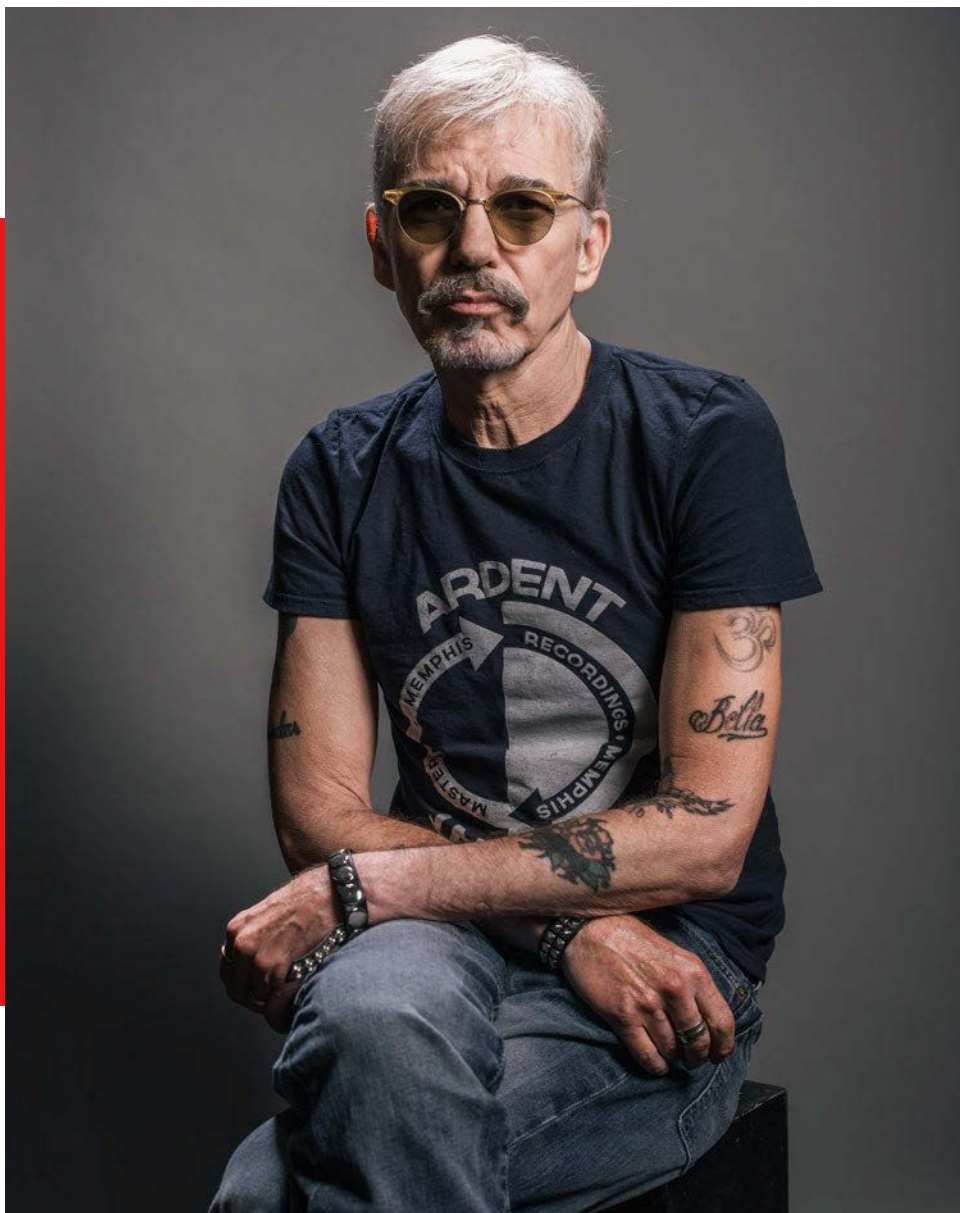


THE GRILL

BILLY BOB THORNTON

Does *Bad Santa* smoke our left-field interrogation?

WORDS IAN FREER



Which character were you in your first school play?

I played the middle Billy goat in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. I think I was a little disappointed; it was interesting enough, [but] I either wanted to be the big Billy goat or the little Billy goat.

What is your signature dish?

I make a grilled pimento cheese sandwich with cream of tomato soup. It's pretty darned good, but it's the only thing I can make.

What is your earliest memory?

When I was three, I remember playing a plastic guitar my parents got me and singing the first song I ever wrote, which was called '*Cat Shit On A Rat Box*'.

Have you ever knowingly broken the law?

In West Hollywood one time, I got a pretty high-priced parking ticket because I didn't know you had to turn the wheels to the kerb. I was shocked when I got that. I thought, "Wow, that's weird."

When in your life have you been the most starstruck?

I got to meet Jimmy Stewart over at Universal

Studios when I first got to L.A. All I did was shake his hand, look at the ground and walk away. That's probably the only time I got really nervous meeting somebody.

What scares you?

Komodo dragons. I just figure if something is a dinosaur, they are not supposed to be here. I don't understand it. Also, stand-up comedy. I have some stand-up comic friends. It would scare me to do it, but it also scares me for them because they are looking for a specific result immediately — laughter. If people don't laugh, it gets very uncomfortable. It's not like I'm going to run into a Komodo dragon in Beverly Hills. And it's not like I am going to be forced into doing stand-up comedy. But both are scary to me.

What is the worst smell in the world?

The tour bus at the end of the tour.

What's the strangest place you've ever thrown up?

Underwater. I was on a houseboat with some friends as a teenager. We were with these girls and I thought I was going to get laid but got so drunk I couldn't perform. I was lying on my

stomach and just started throwing up over the dock. I remember my head going under the water. When I threw up, I sucked water up and things got even worse. When I came back in I was sober enough to be able to do it, but what girl's going to want to do it with a guy with wet hair and puke all over him?

On a scale of one to 10, how hairy is your arse?

Oh gosh, maybe a one. I'm not an especially hairy person.

When was the last time you walked out of a movie?

I have never walked out of a movie, except for *Exorcist II: The Heretic*. I was on a road trip in Virginia with my buddy and we only left because we were both going to sleep all the time. I've never understood walking out of movies. I've especially never understood storming out of movies. I read a review recently where it said, "The real crime in this movie..." It's like, "Are you shitting me?" People need to relax about movies a little bit, ya know?

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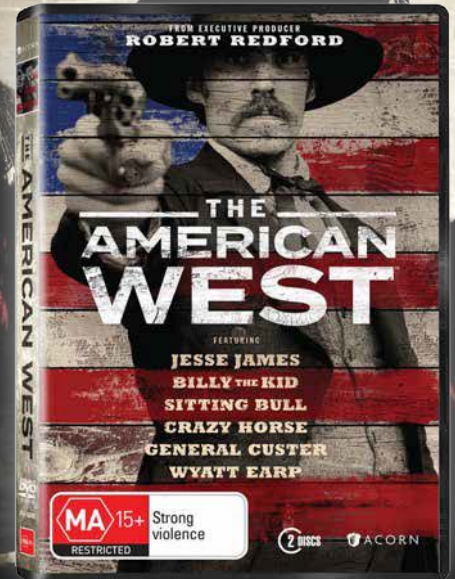
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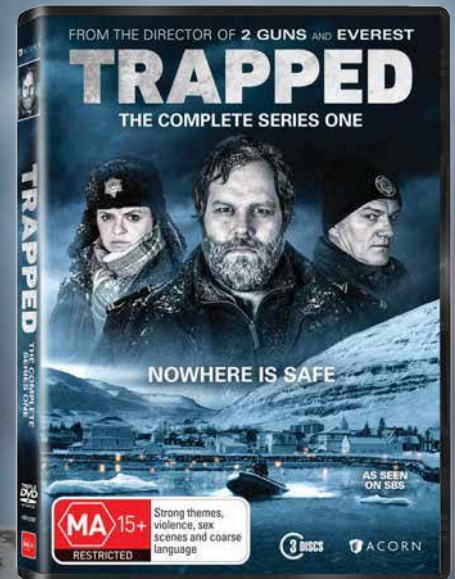
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The Murphy family, from left: Bill (Haley Reinhart), Kevin (Justin Long), Sue (Laura Dern), Maureen (Debi Derryberry), and Frank (Bill Burr).

EFFING FAMILY GUY

Creator of *F Is for Family* Bill Burr on Trump and Season 2

WORDS TIM KEEN

LIKE A DARKLY comic version of *King Of The Hill*, *F Is for Family* follows the dysfunctional Murphy family in 1973: short-tempered war-vet father Frank (Bill Burr), his long-suffering wife Sue (Laura Dern), and their children, whom Frank calls “those fucking animals”. Bill Burr — the co-creator (along with *Simpsons* veteran Michael Price) and the voice of Frank — caught up with *Empire*.

It's very black comedy — is it autobiographical?

It's sort of an amalgam of everybody's childhood in the writers room. I wanted to make sure that my family could watch it and not be mortified that I'd put all our dirty laundry out there.

It shows on Netflix — how did you connect with them?

We got shot down everywhere else. I thought we weren't gonna get it on



the air, but [executive producer] Vince Vaughn was like, “The hell with it, let's go over to Netflix.” I think even they were like “What do these guys wanna do?”, but they just saw Vince sittin' there, and they're like “Well that's Vince Vaughn, shit, let's just do it.” They usually do 12 episodes, that's why we got six, they were like “We'll let you do six episodes and see what you do with it.” And then it went great.

It's a very non-PC version of white working class America... do you think the show has different resonance now that Donald Trump was elected by exactly those people?

That's the cartoon version — no pun intended — of who elected Trump. It's more complex than that — so many people didn't even turn up to vote because they were disgusted by both candidates. It's the most astounding I've ever seen in my life. But I don't think it's gonna affect how people see our show. What's gonna happen to our country now is another thing.

Stylistically, the show looks like a profane *King Of The Hill*.

My thing was I wanted the cars to look like cars from the '60s and '70s. I gotta be honest, when it came down to deciding on eyes and noses and shoulders and how people walk, creatively I wasn't into that. What I was into was the cars — a lot of the cars that people love now from the 1960s, in the 1970s was considered a shitbox, ya know? The realism of the cars — that's something that I'm real proud of. I'm sure we got something wrong — if we did god knows someone will tweet about it.



Tell us a little about Season 2...

The second season is gonna be 10 [episodes], so we can flesh it out — we have almost twice as many shows to tell the second season arc, so you can slow it down, you can pace it out more. It's just way more breathing room, and we're gonna take advantage of that and flesh out some of these other characters. But it's so hard to tell you without telling you what happens. I don't want to spoil it... But Frank's unemployed, trying to get a job, Sue's restless at home, Kevin's getting older and he wants to meet some girls... We know where we wanna go and we're hoping people will come along with us. We see enough tweets to know that people are liking it, and looking forward to the next one.

What's your favourite moment from the show?

The pilot episode, when Kevin comes to help Bill who's getting beat up by the big kids — Kevin rescues him, and when Bill says thank you, Kevin punches him. For me, that's classic older brother stuff. Like, “No one can hit you but me.”

SEASON 1 OF *F IS FOR FAMILY* IS AVAILABLE ON DVD FROM 7 DECEMBER 7

GETTY IMAGES

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EDITED BY JAMES JENNINGS



LA LA LAND



OUT 26 DECEMBER
RATED TBC / 128 MINS

DIRECTOR Damien Chazelle

CAST Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone, John Legend, JK Simmons

PLOT An aspiring actress and a struggling musician meet, flirt, fall in love and then struggle to balance the demands of their blossoming careers with their evolving relationship... and the story is largely delivered via song and dance.

AFTER THE CRITICAL and commercial breakthrough of Damien Chazelle's debut feature *Whiplash*, we can only imagine the nervous collar-tugging when he announced to his reps that his next movie would be... a Fifties-style jazz musical. The good news for all involved is that it is another triumph.

A word up front: if the word "musical" makes your eyes glaze over and attention span snap shut, you're not alone — but this film is worth taking a leap of faith for. Audacious in concept, brilliant in execution, *La La Land* captures the feeling of the classic Hollywood musicals — joy, heartbreak, big emotions painted in bold brushstrokes — without cynicism, but without mirroring itself in the past either. The Coens played the "No Dames" scene in *Hail Caesar!* (the one with Channing Tatum and a roomful of sailors) as a winking simulacrum of a bygone age of classic musicals; Chazelle makes it feel as though that era never ended, and that this is the thoroughly modern result of an unbroken tradition.

It shares some thematic genes with *Whiplash* — a jazz fan out of kilter with a world that no longer values jazz as an art form; a relationship under strain as career and ambition intrudes; the question of whether art is its own reward, or whether it requires an audience — but where *Whiplash* had a bedrock of rage, *La La Land* is built on more emotionally fertile ground. (It still has an angry JK Simmons in it, but he doesn't throw a chair at anyone this time.) Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone are both struggling artists — him a jazz pianist, her an actor — trying to find career footholds in the unforgiving and ruthless "City of Stars"; they connect via the most perfectly LA-centric meet-cute in recent memory, and their relationship evolves almost

against their will, played out in song.

Unlike recent musicals like, say, *Pitch Perfect* — which are conventionally structured movies with musical interludes; you could edit out every song and still follow the plot completely — the performances in *La La Land* are integral and seamlessly woven into the story: almost all the key emotional beats of the story are all delivered via song and dance. And in single takes, no less: the opening number, *Another Day of Sun*, shot amongst the snarl of an LA freeway traffic jam (on the same interchange where the bus had to jump the gap in *Speed!*), is a six-minute single-take (or at least, brilliantly and seamlessly stitched into one.) As an opening to the film, it's an amazing statement of intent.

A Lovely Night is a clever inversion of *Isn't This A Lovely Day* from *Top Hat* — where Fred and Ginger find the silver lining to a rainy day, Ryan and Emma grumble (in song) about a perfect evening — and genuinely was filmed in one single take, with both actors and the crew having to hit every mark to land the scene during the sunset "magic hour" above LA's Fernndell Park (pictured left), near the Griffith Observatory.

No doubt Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling are less technically eye-popping than your Gene Kellys and your Ginger Rogers, but they're both impressive performers, and they have chemistry to burn: it's the third time they've played lovers onscreen, after *Gangster Squad* and *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, and they are so convincing as lovers that when things get rough, it's genuinely affecting. Gosling actually learned to play piano and the keytar (yes, there's keytar!) for the role — no stunt hands here, that's all Gosling's shapely digits on the ivories — even though the actual piano tracks were recorded by Randy Kerber. The songs and music were composed by Justin Hurwitz, who was also the composer of the original compositions in *Whiplash*; Chazelle recruited Broadway songwriters Benj Pasek and Justin Paul for the lyrics. As a follow-up to *Whiplash* — and this year's *10 Cloverfield Lane*, for which he wrote the screenplay — Chazelle has firmly announced himself as one of the brightest jewels in this City Of Stars.

TIM KEEN

VERDICT Gloriously ambitious, brilliantly delivered, joyful and stirring and almost dreamlike, *La La Land* is passionate, forget-the-focus-groups filmmaking at its finest. Sure to midwife a new crop of musicals, this is the most effective dose of CPR to a forgotten genre since *The Artist*.



Woody wouldn't.

THE EDGE OF 17



OUT 5 JANUARY
RATED M / 104 MINS

DIRECTOR Kelly Fremon Craig

CAST Hailee Steinfeld, Haley Lu Richardson, Blake Jenner

PLOT Everything that happens to Nadine (Steinfeld) is unfair, at least in her eyes. She lost her beloved dad and now she's about to lose her only friend, who has started dating her despised brother. The world is out to get her and nobody knows what's she's going through. She is, in short, a teenager.

NADINE BYRD IS a self-declared "old soul". This tells you a lot about her. 1) She thinks about herself an enormous amount; 2) She doesn't believe she fits in with the rest of her generation; 3) She's kind of a dick, because really, who says that? Kelly Fremon Craig's debut

is a bravely honest, very funny movie about what it is to be a teenager, when you think you're different and that nobody understands you, but really it's you who has yet to get a grip on yourself. She doesn't always put us on her heroine's side, but she asks that we always understand her and makes sure we do.

Nadine (Steinfeld) is an awkward, precocious high-school junior, who has one friend, Krista (Richardson), and one parent, having lost her beloved dad a few years ago. When Krista starts dating Nadine's brother Darian (Jenner), who Nadine thinks has led an unfairly charmed life and resents him for it, it is the end of her world. She has, she believes, lost the one remaining person who understood her. She is now all alone.

Nadine is not someone to whom it's easy to warm. She lashes out easily and always believes she is the wronged party. If you think of other good isolated-teen movies, there's usually an element of the lead having been in some way unfairly treated. *Sixteen Candles*' Sam is ignored at home and embarrassed at school; *Easy A*'s Olive was vilified for being promiscuous, even though she wasn't; *Mean Girls*' Cady was subtly bullied for caring about things other than

popularity. Nadine is just unhappy that some things haven't gone her way. She's suffered loss, but so has her brother. It's a bold choice by Fremon Craig to make Nadine's only antagonist herself, but it works because, for one, she's cast Steinfeld in the lead, who can give bruised layers to the anger and snappy delivery to the jokes. She keeps her interesting. In a solo scene where Nadine, locked in a bathroom at a party, begs herself not to be awkward and to make friends, she gets you on side. Fremon Craig keeps seeding these reminders about the softness under the shell.

The other thing she does is to superbly write and cast supporting characters to call Nadine on her bullshit and see something more in her, encouraging us to do the same. In the opening scene, Nadine runs into a classroom to tell her teacher Mr. Bruner (Woody Harrelson) that she's going to kill herself. Rather than try to discourage her, Bruner explains he's thinking about doing the same, for much better reasons. He sees through her nonsense. A nerdy classmate (Hayden Szeto, adorable as a useless flirt) who wants to date Nadine but keeps getting cruelly rebuffed shows Nadine she treats other people the way she thinks they treat her. Fremon Craig draws the whole Nadine via the people around her, so even when you don't like her, you like those who do, which circles you back to liking her.

Though everything Nadine is going through is standard teenage stuff, Fremon Craig stays away from the touchstones of the genre — there are no bullies, no big prom, no cruel teachers or cliques. She treats her subject with grown-up respect, even if she's not quite a grown-up yet.

OLLY RICHARDS

VERDICT A very strong debut by writer-director Kelly Fremon Craig deals with all the usual teenage concerns — dating, family, school — in a way that tries to go beyond genre cliché, with a heroine who is often unlikeable but always believable.



ROSALIE BLUM



OUT DECEMBER 26 / RATED M / 95 MINS

DIRECTOR Julien Rappeneau

CAST Noémie Lvovsky, Kyan Khojandi, Alice Isaaz

ROSALIE BLUM IS the kind of film that deserves adjectives like 'delightful' and 'splendid'. This French-language hodge-podge of genres

maintains one foot in rom-com territory (and actually nails the 'com' part) while avoiding almost every 'rom' trope, partly due to the fact that a mystery lies at the centre of the plot.

A mystery that came at exactly the right time to disrupt the stale existence of our protagonist, Vincent (Kyan Khojandi) — a nice enough bloke who runs a barbershop and lives with a mum that makes overbearing seem sweet by comparison. Vince could live out his daily routine with both eyes closed, so thank the universe that his mother orders him to a store where he encounters a bespectacled clerk named Rosalie (Noémie Lvovsky).

Convinced they've met before but without any memory of the when, where, or even 'if', Rosalie now consumes Vincent's every thought, which essentially turns the unassuming barber into an assuming stalker. Only in French hands could a man so relentlessly shadow a woman without his actions coming across liable, though

Rosalie isn't your average woman, and curiosity is telling her not to freak out as much as fate is telling Vincent she's meant to play a role in his life.

Writer/director Julien Rappeneau adapts Camille Jourdy's graphic novels by splitting the screenplay into three parts and told from three separate perspectives: Vincent, Rosalie's grounding niece Aude (Alice Isaaz), and finally the titular Rosalie — a structure that makes its short running time seem even shorter. All three main players turn in performances that sit seamlessly within the tone, but it's Noémie who most steals our affections with a dynamic performance full of unique choices.

Both clever-funny and silly-funny, and idiosyncratic instead of self-consciously quirky, this is a breezy lark for the entire family, yet never sheds an undercurrent of sincerity, honesty, and a genuine unpredictability usually lacking in the genre. **JEREMY CASSAR**



"Jolie at 12 o'clock..."

ALLIED



OUT 26 DECEMBER
RATED TBC / 124 MINS

DIRECTOR Robert Zemeckis

CAST Brad Pitt, Marion Cotillard, Jared Harris

PLOT Casablanca, 1942. Parachuted into enemy territory, Max Vatan (Pitt) embarks on a fateful mission with beautiful French agent Marianne Beausejour (Cotillard). The pair must pretend to be husband and wife, a façade that soon gives way to something deeper – and more dangerous.

FANS OF BRAD Pitt eating things in movies, rest easy: your man tucks into an entire Moroccan tagine in Robert Zemeckis's stolid, old-fashioned spy thriller. It's one of the few reliable things in a curiously underpowered performance from an actor who should, on paper, lend exactly the kind of star wattage this tale of double-crosses and derring-do needs to spark into life.

Posing as a Parisian mining executive, Pitt's Canadian spy Max Vatan is sent on a deadly mission behind enemy lines. Dropped into the

desert outside Casablanca, he's soon in a *Gilda*-style nightclub finding the other half of his cover story: a glamorous woman wearing hummingbirds on her blouse who'll pose as his wife. It's an apt motif, for the woman — Marion Cotillard's Free French agent — is a free-spirited and captivating beauty. She's soon putting the 'fatale' into *femme* with some dead-eyed Sten gun practice, working on his Parisian accent ("Québécois!" she sniffs, although "Allo 'Allo!" is nearer the mark), and giving him lectures on the local mores. Moroccan men, we learn, always go to the roof after making love to their wives. To maintain their charade, Pitt is regularly sleeping under the stars.

While Cotillard is game as the steely-yet-vivacious Bonnie to Pitt's more introspective Clyde, the only sparks that fly between them come during a slickly executed assassination sequence that recalls the climax of *IngLOURIOUS BASTERDS*. Unlike *Allied*'s obvious romantic touchpoints, from *Casablanca* to *Notorious*, this central pairing is hardly woozy with chemistry. Cotillard's simmering intensity and Pitt's more laconic charms rarely feel like natural bedfellows.

Of course, though, it's into bed they tumble in a second act that relocates them to Blitz-torn London and throws a Nazi agent into the mix. Here, Steven Knight's (*Peaky Blinders*) script seems on a surer footing. The shadow of those

great Hollywood classics gives way to a brisk spy-chase flick straight from the pages of a Jack Higgins or Ken Follett thriller as Pitt's paymasters pick up the scent of Nazi espionage and the pair are jolted from their domestic idyll. There's a marvellously nasty cameo by Simon McBurney as an anonymous intelligence wonk from the feared V Section. He does everything except hiss and shoot flames as he grills Vatan on the mole.

Where *Allied* works best is in testing the strength of its central relationship as it comes under greater duress. Can the two lovers ever entirely trust each other knowing they both lie for a living? Will the brutal facts of war prise apart their bonds of loyalty? And can they keep their chickens alive as the Luftwaffe bombs rain down?

Unlike his most recent period piece, high-wire thriller *The Walk*, Zemeckis keeps most of his technological toys in the box for this one. A more classical piece of filmmaking, shorn of bells and whistles, its show-stopping moment comes with a whirling camera move around a car caught in a desert sandstorm. A reminder of its maker's formidable skills, it's a rare bravura moment in a more workmanlike thriller. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

VERDICT Zemeckis's old-school romance has its moments and Cotillard gives it her all, but it lacks the zip and chemistry to truly spark.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM



OUT NOW
RATED M / 133 MINS

DIRECTOR David Yates

CAST Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Colin Farrell, Samantha Morton, Dan Fogler, Alison Sudol, Ezra Miller, Carmen Ejogo

PLOT Newt Scamander (Redmayne) arrives in New York to pursue his work promoting the care of magical creatures, but finds himself drawn into a conflict between the wizarding world and witch-hunters led by Mary Lou Barebone (Morton).

YOU HAVE TO credit J.K. Rowling. Rather than spin off new big-screen adventures for the generation-defining boy wizard, she and the Warner Bros. team have opened a completely different wizarding saga: a new era, new country and entirely new characters (at least so far). That's a lot of world-building to do, so this film has a bit of the same dense exposition of the first two *Potter* films. But thanks to Rowling's capacity for invention and some utterly glorious new beasts like kleptomaniac platypus the Niffler, the gamble largely succeeds — and, as you'd expect, it looks dazzling doing it.

The visual panache comes with a whole lot of plot. Hogwarts black sheep Newt Scamander (Redmayne) is fresh off the boat when he meets 'No-Maj'/Muggle Jacob Kowalski (Fogler) outside a New York bank. They're carrying similar suitcases — Jacob's contains pastries while Newt's is brimming with mystical creatures he is studying — so you can spot one thing that might go wrong immediately. At the same time, Porpentina Goldstein (Waterston) spots Newt and suspects him to be a threat to magical safety. That also, potentially, makes Newt her way back into the good graces of MACUSA, the local magical government agency and her employer.

Redmayne works hard as Newt, who's as chronically bad with people as he is amiable and well-meaning, a dotty professorial type who peers up from under a shock of hair and avoids eye-contact. But he's so disconnected and withdrawn that he barely shifts facial expression from friendly blankness for the first half hour, when we *really* need him to guide us around. Instead, his new buddy Jacob is clearly meant as our way into the magical world and its comic relief, but his flirtations with Alison Sudol, as Porpentina's sister Queenie, largely suck screen-time really needed for Newt and Tina, the ostensible leads. It's almost the end of the film before they get to connect — a shame, because there is obvious fellow-feeling there and a shared sense of purpose.

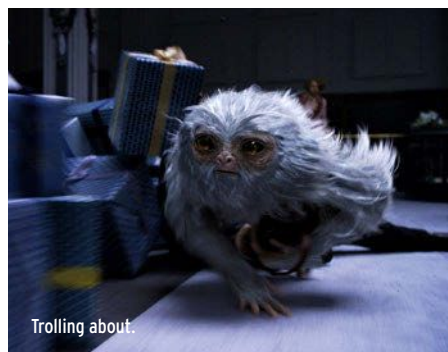
While the leads chase Newt's fugitive creatures and flout the laws against fraternising

with Muggles (or 'No-Majs'), a shadowy prologue has warned of dark magician Gellert Grindelwald. MACUSA's stern boss, Seraphina Picquery (Ejogo), is holding international summits about Grindelwald with characters who will probably be more important down the line (hello, Gemma Chan!). Meanwhile Picquery's head agent, Graves (Farrell) — compelling but slightly shifty — investigates a destructive force that seems to attack the city at random, threatening to reveal the wizarding world to the rest of us. Many of these characters around the edges of the story stand out better than the leads. That's particularly true of Samantha Morton, spitting venom as witch-hater Mary Lou Barebone, and Ezra Miller, who's bruisingly excellent as her sorely abused eldest boy.

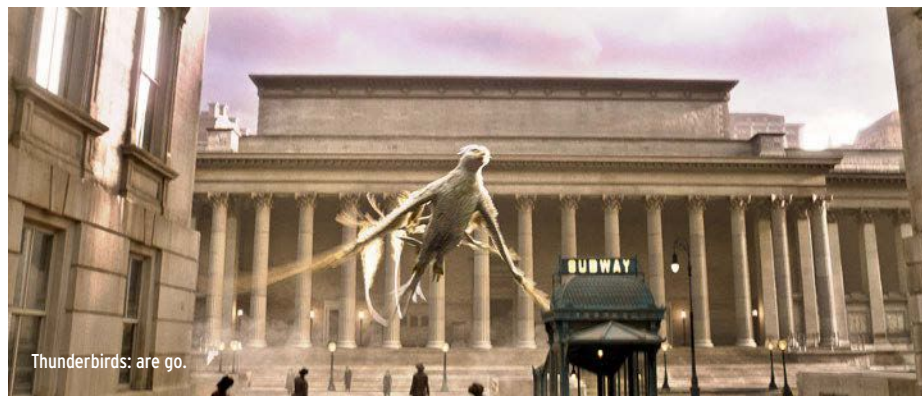
But the film has some structural problems. Rowling's varied beasts are fun, and brilliantly realised by the effects team, but they're ultimately a sideshow, and the numerous action sequences to capture each one can drag. The sight of Oscar winner Redmayne performing a mating dance for a giant hippo-monster will stay with you, but it's not what we need to see when there are truly dastardly dealings afoot across town. It's only in the last act, when Newt focuses on the real threats and discovers the mystery to solve, that the film soars, like Newt's glorious thunderbird Frank, into the heavens.

HELEN O'HARA

VERDICT Big, bold and teeming with imagination, it is so busy world-building that it occasionally forgets to have fun. But with this heavy lifting done, there's every reason to hope for an even more magical adventure next time.

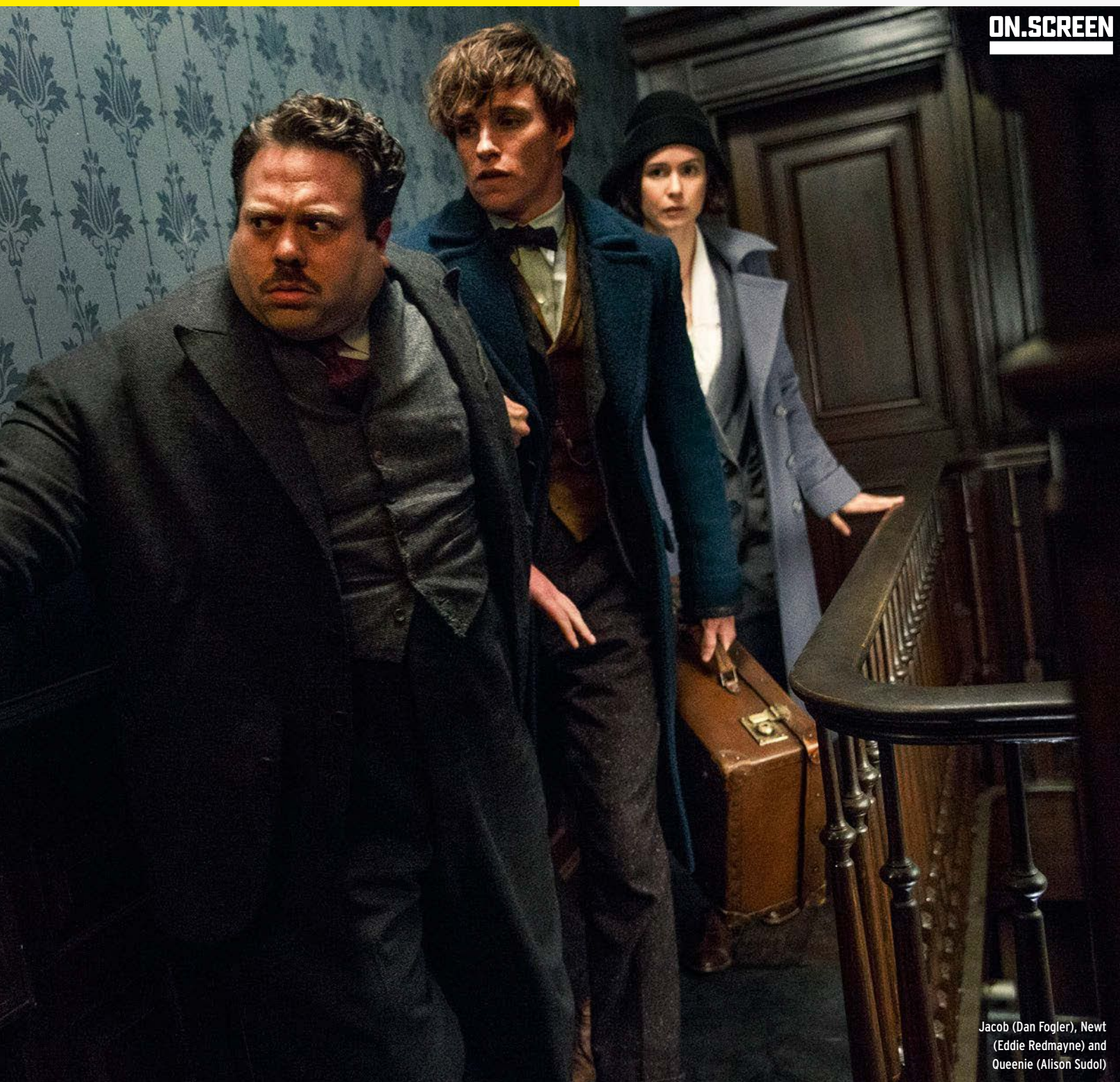


Trolling about.

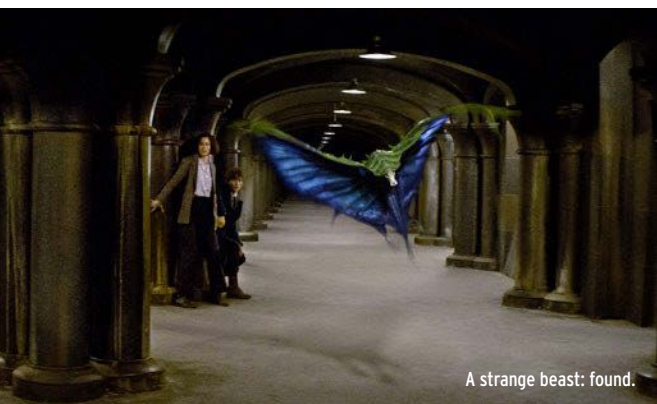


Thunderbirds: are go.





Jacob (Dan Fogler), Newt (Eddie Redmayne) and Queenie (Alison Sudol)



A strange beast: found.



Newt corners the Niffler.



The Rock didn't react well to the bee sting.

MOANA



OUT 26 DECEMBER
CERT TBC / 113 MINS

DIRECTORS Ron Clements, John Musker

CAST (VOICES) Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho, Temuera Morrison, Nicole Scherzinger

PLOT On Motunui, a small island in Polynesia, young Moana (Cravalho) is being raised to lead but dreams of nautical adventure instead. Impending disaster causes her to finally head out past the reef, teaming up with a braggart demigod named Maui (Johnson) on a mission involving a magical stone.

BACK IN 1963, Disney had huge success with a project tapping into Polynesian culture. It wasn't a movie, but a theme-park attraction called the Enchanted Tiki Room stuffed with singing animatronic birds. Amazingly, it's taken 50 years for the studio to make a feature film based around the lore of the Pacific Islands. The good news is, *Moana* was worth the wait. The bad news is, it doesn't have a single singing bird, although there is a scene-stealingly idiotic chicken called Hei Hei.

Originally it looked like the movie was going to be called *Maui*: the name of the tattooed demigod voiced by Dwayne Johnson. It was his folkloric exploits that first grabbed the attention of directors Ron Clements and John Musker. Then they decided to make the lead character a 16-year-old girl instead, creating a bickering, *True Grit*-esque dynamic between her and Maui as they navigate cyan-blue seas. It turned out to be an inspired move: the relationship is relentlessly entertaining. "I am not a princess," Moana insists. "If you wear a dress and you have an animal sidekick, you're a princess," fires back Maui. She does and she has, but there's no love interest and she is every bit the equal to her big-chested, big-talking, curiously nipple-free companion. Like *Frozen*, it's a progressive Disney movie that nimbly dodges outdated tropes.

Also like *Frozen*, it's got some mighty music, thanks in no small measure to the involvement of Broadway smash Lin-Manuel Miranda. There are some parallels between this and the musical that made him famous: both *Moana* and *Hamilton* involve someone leaving a tropical island to achieve greatness (you could call this *Clamilton*), and both feature earworming anthems of empowerment (*We Know The Way* is the one you'll be humming two days later). It's also hard to resist Johnson singing Miranda's

You're Welcome: an ode to egotism that is simultaneously a perfect storm of delightfulness.

Story-wise *Moana* doesn't do anything radical. But visually it's always finding new riffs, whether with the moving tattoo on Maui's pec, a kind of inky Jiminy Cricket, or the sea itself, which transforms into an *Abyss*-style sentient wave to interact with our heroes. There's a gloriously surreal battle with the Kakamora (think the Smokers from *Waterworld*, if Dennis Hopper were a coconut). And perhaps most fun of all is the sequence in which Musker and Clements, the duo who brought us *The Little Mermaid*, take us back under the sea for a confrontation with a glammed-up hermit crab (Jemaine Clement), a foray into a realm of fluoro nightmares.

There's the odd dull stretch and dud line: "When you have a bird to write with, it's called tweeting," is unlikely to age well. It turns out, though, that Polynesian mythology and the House Of Mouse go together very well indeed. Between *Moana* and *Zootopia*, it's been a banner year for Disney Animation: Pixar, watch your back. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

VERDICT A crowd-pleasing oceanic musical with big tunes and beguiling characters, *Moana* is likely to thwack a big smile on your face. And did we mention the idiotic chicken?



They were on the case.

RED DOG: TRUE BLUE



OUT 26 DECEMBER
RATED PG / 88 MINS

DIRECTOR Kriv Stenders

CAST Jason Isaacs, Bryan Brown, Levi Miller, Hanna Mangan Lawrence

PLOT A young boy from the city is sent to live on his Grandpa's cattle ranch in a remote region of Western Australia after his mother is hospitalised. When a storm hits the ranch he saves a dog covered in blue mud, and a friendship is born.

HOW DO YOU follow-up a much-loved box-office smash based on the true story of a pooch who circumnavigated the harshest areas of Aussie terrain in search of his master? That's exactly the challenge that faced Kriv Stenders when he approached *Red Dog: True Blue*.

Rather than following the traditional sequel blueprint, screenwriter Daniel Taplitz, the scribe

behind the first film, and without Louis de Bernières's source material to guide him, has conjured up a truly original conceit that sets a new story in motion that retains all of the Aussie larrikin humour and big heart of the first film, but seen through the eyes of a young boy. It's a prequel of sorts, but the way the film tells its story is delightful. Levi Miller (*Pan*) shows talent as Mick, the displaced teen and Bryan Brown can play roles like Grandpa in his sleep. In fact, there is an over-familiarity with some of the material once the story proper begins to unfold, but there is still much to enjoy. Like the first film, the landscape looks stunning. He may have a background in low-budget film-making, but Stenders knows how to capture the magic of the outback. He also knows how to get a great pooch performance. After striking canine gold with the original red dog, the sadly departed Coco, with Phoenix — playing Blue — he has found another dog worthy of the Palm Dog Award.

DAVID MICHAEL BROWN

VERDICT Fans of the first film will be delighted. *Red Dog: True Blue* barks up all the right trees.



GIMME DANGER



OUT DECEMBER 26 / RATED M / 108 MINS

DIRECTOR Jim Jarmusch

CAST Iggy Pop, Mike Watt, Ron Asheton, James Williamson, Scott Asheton

INARGUABLY THE MOST influential American rock band of all time, The Stooges have long

deserved a definitive biopic. And really, there could not have been anyone better qualified to make it than Jim Jarmusch (who cast Iggy Pop to brilliant effect in both *Coffee And Cigarettes* and *Dead Man*). But the problem with biopics about bands who were overlooked at the time — particularly a time when video cameras were far less omnipresent than they are today — is, inevitably, a scantness of footage. Or at least footage that anyone with even the slightest interest in The Stooges will not have seen plenty of times before.

So while the 1970 clip of Iggy walking over a Cincinnati crowd and smearing himself with a jar of brown goo ("That's... it looks like peanut butter!" says an aghast, old-world TV commentator over the top) may be as glorious as the day it was first uploaded to YouTube, it does not, like much of the archive footage here, feel like fresh information. In addition, most of the early days stories recounted by surviving band

BONUS FEATURE



DOG DAY AFTERNOONS

Kriv Stenders talks about casting his new lead

How easy was it to find your new dog?

We recruited Luke, our dog trainer, again to start the search. It's an elimination process. It's really about Luke spending time with the dog. For six months he had four dogs come and live with him. It would take him a month to figure out if a dog was capable of doing what we needed him to do. As is usually the case with this kind of thing, it's quite protracted. Coco had such a classic iconic face. Phoenix had these beautiful eyes and the proportions of his face were right. We had to screen test the dogs. Put a camera on them on every angle. You have to be rigorous, almost forensic, about casting and that takes time. It's like casting a human actor and then living with them for a month. [Laughs] And then deciding if they're right!

How is it having a dog in the lead role?

It's not dissimilar to working with human actors. You build a rapport. You get a sense of their energy. Every actor is different and every dog is different, Coco, for example, was freaked out by any loud noises so when we had a shot in the pub everyone had to clap silently and had to mouth being drunk. Phoenix was the exact opposite, he took it all in his stride. Dogs do get tired and lose concentration. You can't work them hard. It's like working with children. You have to be careful and respectful of their hours and work around that in your schedule. **DMB**

members are set to animated sequences: an increasingly common music documentary trick that can be effective (see, most recently, *Supersonic* and *Montage Of Heck*), but which here feels overused.

Deflating, too, is the use of The Stooges' Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame induction in 2010 (the same year as Genesis and ABBA) as a kind of but-it-all-worked-out-in-the-end finale. Then, now and forever, the essence of this most important of bands has very little to do with such establishment backslappery.

Fortunately though, in the shape of the irrepressible Iggy Pop, *Gimme Danger* has a genial, natural raconteur whose stories — "I went to Detroit with a tab of mescaline and a shovel" begins one — are impossible to resist. And so against the odds, The Stooges' very own superhero succeeds in rescuing his band's story from the jaws of defeat.

HAMISH MACBAIN



Starkiller base's tight arse Tuesday wasn't much of a hit due to its outdated movie titles.

PATERSON



OUT 22 DECEMBER
RATED M / 118 MINS

DIRECTOR Jim Jarmusch
CAST Adam Driver, Golshifteh Farahani, Barry Shabaka Henley

PLOT Paterson (Driver) is a bus driver and poet who lives in Paterson, New Jersey, whose existence follows a quiet, humdrum pattern. And it's him the film follows, over eight typical days in his life.

YOU CAN BE sure nothing much will happen in a Jim Jarmusch film, but that it will fail to happen in interesting ways. Even when he dabbled in Westerns with *Dead Man*, or vampires with *Only Lovers Left Alive*, Jarmusch focused on languorous pauses and non-events, finding his drama and comedy in the tiny shifts of everyday life. That's never been more true than in this profoundly understated character study, which is stuffed with charm and humour but entirely devoid of major incident.

Adam Driver stars as Paterson, a bus driver and amateur poet in the industrial town of Paterson, New Jersey. Over the course of just over a week we see his life quietly unfold, full of small crises and overheard conversations on the bus. He scratches out poetry between shifts, usually sitting in contemplation beside the town's Great Falls. At home his wife, Laura (Farahani), has usually created some new monochromatic artwork; even her baking is black-and-white. They eat dinner, Paterson walks his (scene-stealing) dog Marvin to a quiet bar and then goes home to bed.

That's almost the entire plot, repeated over eight days, but Jarmusch's eye for detail and humanity makes it close to riveting. There's tension in the suspicion that something will upset Paterson's quiet existence, and indeed, signals throughout suggest myriad ways that things could

go wrong. Jarmusch layers parallels between his hero, the location and a book of William Carlos Williams's poetry — also called *Paterson* — that clearly inspired Jarmusch and to which Driver's character keeps returning. There are surreal touches: a preponderance of twins, and characters who might be projections of Paterson's mind, so closely do they mirror his thoughts.

Mostly, however, the supporting cast navigate their own odd little paths. Farahani is luminously good as Laura, in a role that might have been silly or even cruel in other versions of this story. She has no steady job, wiles away her days on art of varying merit and makes occasionally extravagant demands of her husband. But she's also a creative whirlwind who is clearly as devoted to him as he is to her, lovingly designing him a packed lunch every day and experimenting with new meals each evening — to his gentle appreciation even when the results are clearly inedible.

Outside their home, Barry Shabaka Henley is warmly funny as Doc, the bartender friend who spends evenings in companionable silence with Paterson, and there are witty vignettes with passing strangers of generally cheery disposition. It's the sort of world where characters hope to make their fortune in chess, or cupcakes, and where even violence is strangely non-threatening. There's something nostalgic about the fading industrial landscape of the town, in Doc's jazz bar and its visitors. Even the sort of blue-collar artist that Paterson embodies seems like one of the mid-20th century Beat poets rather than any inhabitant of the 21st.

But it's Driver's still, deep Paterson who makes it work, with a performance that could not be less showy, nor more effective. Paterson's modernist poetry runs through the film, both narrated by Driver and placed on screen. It starts off sounding gauche and childlike, but by the end it's become almost meditative. And perhaps even profound. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT Quiet, thoughtful and deeply human, this is one of Jarmusch's finest and features Adam Driver's best performance yet — although you do risk coming out with a new affection for modernist poetry.



THE FENCER



OUT NOW / RATED PG / 99 MINS

DIRECTOR Klaus Härö
CAST Lembit Ulfak, Märt Avandi, Kirill Käro, Tõnu Oja, Ursula Ratasepp

IT'S A SUGARFREE *Dead Poets*, an adult *School Of Rock*. It's *Sister Act II* without nuns or medleys or a young Lauryn Hill. It's a teacher-inspiring-students tale where the cohort's success isn't the highest stake. We're in 1940. There's no John Keating, Dewey Finn, or Sister Mary Clarence to unleash the fun and freedom in all of us. This is as much fun as can be had sitting in class during WWII, which is surprisingly quite a lot, albeit subtler.

Protagonist Endel Nelis (Märt Avandi) boasted a life with world-class fencing on the horizon, until forced to flee his hometown of Leningrad due to the Secret Police and take a job at a tiny, underfunded school in a tiny, underfunded town, with the task to teach sport. As their facilities are limited and fencing equipment is in abundance, he turns his class of tiny, adorable children into a strict fencing class.

As the sinister-with-a-capital-s principal of the school, Hendrik Toompere wields an unspoken power over Endel, sensing that a man so educated would prefer to flourish in the city.

The further the semester progresses, the more entwined Endel becomes with his fencing students, and the more the kids open up the more Avandi's stone-face shows cracks of genuine light. Endel will now risk the life he was so terrified to lose, for the sake of the kids he's grown to adore.

A refreshing counterpoint to films set on the front-lines of war, without ignoring it altogether, this is a small, remarkably shot story with a big soul that tries with all its might (and mostly succeeds) to avoid the subgenre's overt clichés. **JEREMY CASSAR**



"Now, Doctor Jones, you give me the diamond."

A UNITED KINGDOM



OUT 26 DECEMBER
RATED PG / 111 MINS

DIRECTOR Amma Asante

CAST David Oyelowo, Rosamund Pike, Jack Davenport, Vusi Kunene, Tom Felton

PLOT Late 1940s London, and law student Seretse Khama (Oyelowo) falls for office worker Ruth (Pike). But he is heir to the leadership of the Bamangwato people, and their union draws the ire of both them and the British Empire.

AMMA ASANTE'S LAST film, 2013's *Belle*, emphasised the link between the personal and political in the story of a slave's daughter who helped end slavery. *A United Kingdom* manages a similar feat, offering a touching romance then hitting the audience with the dehumanising evils of colonialism. Both stories would seem implausible if they weren't fact-based but, if anything, this one struggles to cram in the dramatic ups and downs of its central romance.

We open in London in the late 1940s, with Ruth Williams (Pike) dragged to a missionary

dance by her sister Muriel (Laura Carmichael). There, she is instantly struck by Seretse Khama (Oyelowo), the future leader of Bechuanaland (modern-day Botswana), who's holding forth on colonial politics. They dance together — and then, daringly, keep meeting. Soon, with his return to Africa imminent, he proposes and she accepts. It's a dizzying, quickly sketched courtship, but Asante establishes the pair's commitment and courage.

The obstacles to the match soon mount. Her father (Nicholas Lyndhurst) disowns her, and neighbours assault the couple in the street. But far more dangerous are the colonial authorities, led by Alistair Canning (Davenport, sneering for England), terrified of offending apartheid South Africa by installing a mixed-race couple in power on their border. They try to break the match, or drive the couple into exile, or persuade Seretse's equally disapproving uncle and regent Tshekedi Khama (Kunene) into a conflict that would justify direct rule from London.

Through illness, exile and unrelenting pressure, the couple's commitment to each other is the only constant — and there the performances of Pike and Oyelowo, devoted and utterly stoic, are essential as the focus shifts, with just a slight wobble, from love story to geopolitical scrap.

Asante still finds personal moments amid the

political storms and emphasises Ruth's less headline-grabbing struggles in her new home. She sensitively sketches the understandable reservations of African women faced with this white intruder, who self-consciously practises waving like the Queen as she tries to figure out her role, and makes a character of the *kgotlas*, the popular gatherings to affirm or reject Seretse's place as chief of his people. And she has empathy for the colonial administrators too: however unjust their actions, they're convinced of their own righteousness. But if there's a criticism to be made of the film's second half, it's in the (sadly factual) distance between the leads.

The film ends, if anything, a touch too early, before Botswana's independence is secured and before the couple really became a shining contrast to the pariah state of apartheid South Africa. But as an example of uncommon love and humanity defeating one part of a grotesque system, it's quietly inspiring. There may be a hint of rose-tinting to the film's depiction of Ruth and Seretse, but then, that could just be the African sun shining on a story about hope.

HELEN O'HARA

VERDICT It glides romantically along on the surface while political turmoil boils away underneath. Its plea for tolerance isn't subtle, but it's a story that deserves to be told.



NO JEDI

NO FORCE

NO LIGHTSABERS

NO HOPE?

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY, THE FRANCHISE'S FIRST STAND-ALONE INSTALMENT, SENDS A SQUAD ON AN IMPOSSIBLE MISSION, AND IS **STAR WARS'** BIGGEST CHANGE-UP YET

WORDS DAN JOLIN



WE'RE IN THE THICKEST PART

of the nuttiest time of the show," says John Knoll with a weary chuckle. "Full factory mode." It's late October and *Rogue One*, the fourth *Star Wars* movie that the veteran ILM visual-effects supervisor has worked on (unless you count the 1997 Special Editions), isn't going to bed without a fight. This is often how it is with big-studio blockbusters in post-production, lightspeeding to meet their release-date deadlines. Always more chunks of data to crunch, always further finessing to be done on photo-real CG shots. But *Rogue One* has proven a pricklier beast than most. It's not been easy for Knoll, and his exhaustion is evident in the weighty sighs that punctuate our conversation.

Yet this is also, he insists, his favourite part of the process. "The results of years of planning, meetings and design work finally come together,

and the shots are looking great. Always very energising and exciting to see." Plus, for Knoll, there's an additional, especially satisfying layer of gratification to this end-game phase — one which not so many VFX supervisors get to feel. "*Rogue One* is something that's sprung from my imagination," he says. "So that's fun."

Back in the summer of 2003, Knoll was in Sydney working with George Lucas and producer Rick McCallum on *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*. As Lucas orchestrated Anakin's fall, midwived the birth of the Skywalker twins and teased a first-glimpse holo-plan of a moon-sized Imperial WMD, Knoll's mind tractor-beamed back to *Episode IV*'s yellow-fonted opening crawl. One line kept nagging at him: "During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the DEATH STAR." It struck him as a fantastic



Above left: Director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn) surveys his technological terror.
Above: Jyn's father Galen (Mads Mikkelsen).
Above right: Pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed) in a spot of bother.
Here: Sparks fly around droid K-2SO (Alan Tudyk).

untold story, and he wondered if it might be a good fit for the *Star Wars* TV show he knew Lucas and McCallum were then developing.

After an exploratory chat with McCallum, it turned out it wasn't. So the concept went dormant for nine-and-a-half years. In late 2012, when Kathleen Kennedy was appointed Lucasfilm president, she announced that, in addition to the continuation of the Skywalker saga, there would be a new strand of stand-alone *Star Wars* movies. The next year, encouraged by friends to whom he had mentioned the idea, Knoll plucked up courage and booked a meeting with Kennedy and Lucasfilm's 'Head Of Story' Kiri Hart. Then, over 45 minutes, he laid out his vision: "A sort of *Mission: Impossible*-style break-in to the most secure facility of the Empire to steal the Death Star plans." It had some *Zero Dark Thirty* in there, some *Guns Of Navarone*, some *Ocean's*

Eleven. He detailed how it would focus on all-new characters, while also allowing a certain, wheezy Dark Lord of the Sith to return to our screens. Kennedy was impressed. She'd already been discussing concepts for non-saga stories with the now-retired Lucas, but here was one that was, she says, "more concrete and solid" than any other. So she pulled the trigger. And, as Knoll puts it, "It gradually snowballed into what we have today."

The original idea was that the *Star Wars* Stories would be "smaller, scrappier, lower-budget" than the Episodes. But *Rogue One* grew in the telling. "It got more and more epic," Knoll says. Not that it would lose its 'scrappy' spirit. Not if Gareth Edwards, British director of the micro-budget *Monsters* (2010) and mega-scaled *Godzilla* (2014), had anything to do with it. "Gareth has this almost documentary *vérité* style and it's great to see how that works in the *Star*

Wars universe," says Knoll. "It gives it all a very real feel."

MAKING *ROGUE ONE* FELT ALMOST too real for Felicity Jones. "A seven-month shoot, six-day weeks and intensive training," is how the Birmingham-born actor sums up her tenure as the movie's heroine, Jyn Erso. When she wasn't evading stormtroopers on Maldives beaches or thwacking bad guys with combat batons, she spent a lot of her time nursing chafed limbs. "My family would be like, 'Are you okay? Is there anything we should do?'" she laughs. "I'd just say, 'I'm fine, it's just another day on set, don't worry about it.' It was hugely demanding. But such an adventure."

Her co-star Diego Luna concurs. As Rebel intelligence officer Cassian Andor, who >



Above left: Forest Whitaker as extreme Rebel Saw Gerrera. **Above:** Is that Krennic's shuttle coming in to land? **Left:** Platoon leader Pao. **Here:** Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) at the Rebels' base.

chaperones Jyn on her perilous search for her Death Star-designing father (Mads Mikkelsen), and heads up the film's diverse, plans-heisting team, he matched her bruise for bruise. "We were always dirty and wounded," he recalls. "There was not much to imagine there. The guns we were holding were very heavy. Things were exploding in front of us... It was just insane."

Even Alan Tudyk, who plays reprogrammed Imperial droid K-2SO, an entirely digital character, felt the heat of the war zone. Literally. At the end of the shoot, John Knoll asked if there was anything he'd advise them to change about the motion-capture suit he'd been wearing for the past half year. There was one thing, replied Tudyk. He pointed out two places on the fractal-decorated unitard where flying sparks from the production's pyrotechnic effects had smoldered through to his skin. "These suits need

to be fire-proof."

The bumps, bruises and minor burns were necessary to creating the unique tone of this *Star Wars* adventure. *Rogue One* presents a galaxy bereft of Jedi, its inhabitants distanced from the Force. Some, like blind warrior-monk Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen), may emulate the Jedi, but they can't move things with their minds. The industrial crackle and hum of lightsaber duels has long-since fallen silent. For some filmmakers, the forced absence of these none-more-*Star Wars* elements might represent a curse. But Knoll insists it's a gift.

"Part of the appeal of the story is that this is a dark time when people are fighting and dying and engaging in acts of bravery without the benefit of Force powers," he muses. "These are ordinary people who feel they have to do something about the evil that's happening in the

universe." Edwards agrees, arguing *Rogue One's* heroes are much more accessible: "There's not gonna be any magical solution," he says. "They have to solve it themselves. The film's about people I can relate to."

People such as Riz Ahmed's character, which the director feels is closest to himself, being the hero who's always saying, "This is all crazy! What am I doing here?" Bodhi Rook is a former Imperial cargo pilot whose homeworld, Jeddah (a kind of Mecca to Jedi disciples like Chirrut), has become occupied territory. "He's just a guy," says Ahmed. "An everyman who finds himself thrust into the middle of historic events. He's someone who is disconcerted by what they're up against. It makes his decisions and choices much braver."

Even the chief villain played by Ben Mendelsohn, Director Orson Krennic, has his jackboots planted firmly on the ground. "The



THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF DARTH VADER

OTHER NOTABLE NON-EPISEODE APPEARANCES BY THE SITH LORD

SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE (1978)

Alan Dean Foster's novel follow-up to *Star Wars*, in which Luke and Leia battle Vader for a powerful crystal on a swampy planet named Mimban. He lightsaber-duels both heroes, but it's Luke who beats the looming villain, cutting off his arm and sending him tumbling down a pit.

PLANET OF KADRI (1980)

This *Los Angeles Times* comic-strip sees Lord Vader developing a poisonous gas named "pacifog"; by putting "kunda crystals" in his stormtroopers' breathing filters, he makes them immune. His chemical warfare plan goes awry, though, when Luke, Han and co find a "vibro-crystal" which shatters the kundas. Curse those pesky Rebels.

SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE (1996)

Though it was Lucasfilm's own multimedia expansion, set before *Return Of The Jedi*, *Shadows Of The Empire* is now considered non-canon. The video game, comic and novel all feature Vader squaring off against a green-faced rival named Prince Xizor, boss of space-Mafia group Black Sun.

VADER'S QUEST (1999)

Dark Horse Comics' four-issue miniseries picks up immediately after *A New Hope's* explosive ending, with Vader trying to track down the young pilot who destroyed the Death Star, torturing and killing people along the way. For a while he has a bird-man lackey named Ban Papeega, who dresses like someone from Tudor times.

STAR WARS INFINITIES (2001)

This four-part comic series presents a series of 'what if' scenarios for the original trilogy. So 'A New Hope' sees the Death Star undestroyed, Leia captured and Vader training her up to be a Sith Lady; while 'Return Of The Jedi' concludes with Vader surviving and turning good, with natty all-white helmet and robes.

Empire's a little bit like the BBC," half-jokes Edwards, "in that it's very Oxbridge. And Ben wanted to embrace the fact Krennic had more of a working-class route through the Empire."

Mendelsohn describes the Advanced Weapons Research head as "a man that's made his way up the chain through his ability to operate within the power struggles of the Empire". Power struggles, he hints, that will place him in opposition to the Sith Lord formerly known as Anakin. "It's fair to say Lord Vader and he aren't friendly. Darth is very much about the Force. Krennic is about force. Not really down with the whole mystical thing."

So Edwards's approach, with its emphasis on handheld camera-work, real-world locations and practical effects, isn't just fancy-pants posturing. Or a way to torture his actors. "Gareth created a sense of emotional immediacy," says Forest Whitaker, who plays "war-torn veteran" Saw

Gerrera (a supporting character lifted from the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animated series). It's an approach, he tells *Empire*, "that lends itself to a realistic depiction of war."

If you want to effectively show a galaxy where ordinary people face vast odds without the protection of superpowered knights, you have to make it as visceral as possible. Even if that means jumping down into the trenches with them.

"THE WHOLE METHODOLOGY WITH

Rogue One," says Felicity Jones, "was to keep it very naturalistic. Gareth often holds the camera himself because he wants to be there with you. With Gareth we felt like we were all in it together."

Every day, Jiang Wen had to lumber about in a cumbersome battle-suit as cynical rebel warrior Baze Malbus. Even in difficult conditions, such >



as the sucking, wet sand of the Maldives' Laamu Atoll. So he in particular felt for his director. "He shoots like he's a character among us," the Chinese actor says. "He held the camera all day, and that thing's heavy. And you realise he's tired. But I can tell he has a very big passion inside. Because he still carried that thing the whole day, from beginning to end."

Getting down and dirty with the cast was, says Edwards often "stressful", and something of a gamble on a film like this, but the rewards always outweighed the risks. "If you play it safe you're not going to do anything new or different. You have to take risks. It's the bit that excites me. At the end of the day, people don't watch a spreadsheet, they watch a movie. It should be about what gets in front of the camera."

Empire's conversations with the people who fought on the front lines of this gritty mission

movie are replete with tales of impressive but challenging locations (Jordan and Iceland in addition to the Maldives), but what most impressed them was the way Edwards allowed them to find nuanced, convincing character moments within each scene.

The sets were built in 360 degrees, rather than small segments, so Edwards's camera was free to point and rove in any direction. Director of photography Greig Fraser would light scenes using in-camera sources, so there was no chance of crew equipment getting into shot. Extras, even those encased in Neal Scanlan's lovably bizarre alien or robot costumes, were asked to sustain their background performances over extended periods rather than in short bursts. "Everyone was existing and living in these environments," explains Edwards. "I wanted to make it feel like a real world."

Hong Kong martial-arts hero Donnie Yen has more experience than most on elaborate, large-scale movies, but even he was astonished by the immersive environments. "I have never been on sets with so much resource," he says. "There were scenes where I'm inside this cargo ship and we had this hydraulic mechanism to rock it, and 360-degree bluescreen around it to project footage of us flying through space. Oh my goodness. It gives you that sense of actually flying in space without having to act like it."

Luna describes how every lever in that ship's cockpit could be manipulated, how every button and screen emitted light or gave a reaction to your touch — even if it was never destined to be in shot. It was so enjoyable, he tells us, "I would be hoping someone fucks up so we can do one more take!"

There was, however, a downside to Edwards's guerrilla process; producer Kathleen Kennedy



Left: Death troopers defend the beaches of Scarif.
Above right: Baze Malbus (Jiang Weng) and Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen).
Above: Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) takes aim.
Right: Darth Vader checks in with Krennic.

certainly sensed some frustration from him. “Crafting it through the lens is very much a product of his style,” she says, “but it’s very, very hard to do inside these giant movies where you have to plan everything. Finding that balance for Gareth was tough.”

It is also one of the reasons why John Knoll’s brainchild is giving him such a headache now, during these final stages. Because Edwards doesn’t block his scenes out ahead of shooting, instead allowing the actors to find and hit their own marks while the cameras roll, “that can make it a little harder to make sure you have bluescreens in the right places”. Sometimes Knoll would just have to say, “Okay, we shot it, but there weren’t any tracking marks [to indicate where VFX elements would go]. Well... We’ll figure it out, I guess.” So, he admits, “It’s been a little harder in post.” But there is an all-important upside. “You

do get that spontaneity in-camera that outweighs those concerns. In the end, the results are better.”

WHETHER THOSE RESULTS ARE STRONG

enough to earn Edwards and his feisty band of freedom fighters another mission is a moot point. Kennedy is insistent that this story, crammed as it is into a very specific chronological nook, is a one-off. There will be no *Rogue Two*.

“I think that’s what makes it exciting. You can just drop into *Rogue One* and not feel like you’re being pulled along into something you need to make a commitment to. It means anything can happen.” There is a real sense of jeopardy for this Death Star-defying gang; high stakes might very well mean a high body count, with no Force-ghost comebacks to alleviate the grief.

“It’s meant to be its own thing,” Knoll affirms.

Although... “I have thought of something we could do if there was interest in doing another one in the same vein. But nothing I’m ready to talk about.” Edwards, however, says he’s heard different.

“I can tell you something,” he says, leaning in conspiratorially to give *Empire* the scoop. “I’m not sure if this is gonna happen, but apparently they’re considering doing a sequel where you’ll find out what the Rebel Alliance did with the plans. Potentially it’ll be directed by George Lucas, and you’ll maybe see the result where they...” he drops his voice, “*blow up* the Death Star.” He leans back, grinning, joke-torpedo launched. “I think they’re still in negotiations. But, I mean, they have a lot to live up to.”

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY IS IN CINEMAS FROM 15 DECEMBER



INTO AFRICA

HOW DIRECTOR AMMA ASANTE TOOK ON BLISTERING HEAT AND
GIANT LIZARDS TO MAKE EPIC ROMANCE *A UNITED KINGDOM*

WORDS PHIL DE SEMLYEN



IT'S A WHIRLWIND once you get involved in a project like this," reflects Amma Asante of *A United Kingdom*. "You don't talk to anyone, and family and friends go on pause." The making of the director's third film, after *A Way Of Life* (2004) and *Belle* (2014), proved to be a testing endeavour. It tells the true-life story of Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo) and Ruth Williams (Rosamund Pike), whose against-the-odds romance makes Cinderella's trip to the ball look like a Tinder encounter. He was Botswana royalty; she was a wartime ambulance driver-turned-Lloyd's insurance clerk. They met, fell in love and decided to marry. The hitch? The British Empire had other ideas.

To capture the epic scope of the stirring interracial love story, director, cast and crew travelled from London to Botswana and back again. "We shot on two continents, used drones and on some days had nearly 5,000 extras," details Asante. Having returned safely from the sweltering *veldt*, she sat down with *Empire* to talk through how she brought her film to life...



< IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY

"This photo showcases some items from my glorious wardrobe. David Oyelowo liked to laugh at me for wearing this floppy hat. We were in Botswana for five months, where the hottest day was 55 degrees. There was no shade and when you breathe you're just sucking in hot air. I was terrified at first that I wouldn't be able to think in the heat. But when you're a woman filmmaker, you can't complain – everyone thinks you're doing it because you're a woman. You learn very quickly to put your big-girl panties on and behave like a big girl.

"I'm also drinking ginger beer here, which I loved as a kid. If you go an hour without drinking in that heat, you have a problem. But I could only drink so much water, so I lived on the local ginger beer."

> UNCIVIL SERVICE

"Jack [Davenport] says he's perfected the 'swine-ish' niche, but the people his civil servant, Sir Alistair Canning, was based on were actually 10 times worse. This scene was shot in Goldsmiths' Hall in the City of London, showing the power of the Empire. We had to cover up a mirror and bring in the chairs, desk and period horns, but this was an amazing room. I'd never seen baguette crystals before I saw the chandelier in there."



> BEST OF BRITISH

"Ruth and Seretse's story makes me cry. They had to overcome so many setbacks to arrive at a place where they could be happy. David fell in love with Susan Williams's book *Colour Bar* when the producers optioned it in 2010 and he'd been trying to make the film ever since. He was savvy enough to know that he had to earn more stripes to be able to carry a movie at that point.

"The timing was perfect for all three of us, in the end. We'd each had different levels of individual success, mainly platformed by America – David with *Selma*, Rosamund with *Gone Girl*, me with *Belle* – and it just felt right to come back together and do something really British. Even though a lot of *A United Kingdom* is set in Africa, it's about British history as much as anything else. It's about our history together."



< PLANE SAILING

"A few people have asked if this plane was an effects shot. We found it after a recce in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and we loved the fact it had 'South African Airways' printed on it. Ruth and Seretse's actual journey was more complex than we were able to show, but we loved being able to bring some period authenticity."

"This is our camera operator, Jon Beacham. There were days when he was doing handheld and the sweat was pouring off him. The heat was one thing, but happily we didn't have any wildlife or snake problems in rural Botswana. I did find a big lizard in my room, though. I ran down to the hotel bar and said, 'I need an African man and I don't care if he's black or white – he just needs to get up to my room and take this thing off the ceiling.'" >



› THE KING'S SPEECH

"Seretse's speeches [to the people of Botswana] needed punch, so David and I played around with how they'd work on screen. The real speeches went on for four days and were more like court cases. To have more impact, we decided to have one strong speech to more people, so in the end the original transcripts didn't help much.

"For David and I, our paths haven't been the same but we've had similar journeys, so we're just very easy with each other. We first worked together 18 years ago on a BBC show I created called *Brothers And Sisters*, and it's really interesting when you've watched someone long enough to see them grow up, and you've grown up too. I think that was his first role out of drama school and he was just about to get married to his wife Jessica. He's obviously more mature now, but he always had this quiet dignity and confidence. He hasn't become 'Hollywood' at all."

> ROSAMUND'S BABY

"Ruth is a really interesting character. She existed in a wartime world where women had to do men's jobs, so her experiences were an early feminism. Then she went to a place where they didn't even have running water, which must have been a culture shock. I suspect if she was here today she'd say she just got on with it. I admire her greatly. It was really important that she had a strong arc in the film, and one that complemented Seretse's. I'm fascinated by how human beings cope with extraordinary, stressful moments in their lives.

"After the Toronto [Film Festival] screening, the child of the baby you see in the film – who is now a grown, very handsome man and happens to be the nephew of the President of Botswana – stood up and said, 'You've done this for my country and I'm very, very grateful for that.' We were all in tears."



< CORRIDORS OF POWER

"This is St Stephen's Hall in Parliament. We were the second film to shoot in Parliament, after *Suffragette*. That's Jack Lowden as Tony Benn on the right. I wish I could have told more of his story, because Tony and Seretse were like brothers. Melissa Benn, Tony's daughter, is Seretse's goddaughter and one of Seretse's sons was named after Tony. I feel a bit gutted that I couldn't explore that relationship more, but trying to explain the impact of Tony Benn in someone else's story just doesn't do him justice. When Jack read for the role we all looked at each other and said, 'It's him.' He just got him right. In the middle is old Anton Lesser as Clement Atlee. He only had this one scene, but he did it fabulously."



^ THE TALISMAN

"Tom Felton, who was in *Belle*, plays a civil servant called Rufus Lancaster in the film. Tom's my lucky charm and I'm considering putting him in my next film, but it's set in Nazi Germany. Am I really going to turn Tom Felton into a Nazi? He was like, 'Amma, I can do it!' I said, 'I know you can, Tom, but people will think I've got some kind of weird obsession with you.'"



< IT'S A WRAP

"I loved shooting in Botswana when it got to 5pm; it was just so pleasant. Although, at the time of the year we were shooting, the sun goes down in 12 minutes. We had to either shoot our sunset shots in record time or over the course of several days, which is hard for actors.

"It's been lovely to see the response to the film at screenings. I've made it for my dad, for my mum, for all the people who have never really had the opportunity to see their continent depicted on screen in a positive way. So often when we see Africa in movies, it's not necessarily fun to look at, but it's a beautiful, beautiful place where great things have happened. I can't wait to go back."

A UNITED KINGDOM IS IN CINEMAS FROM 26 DECEMBER

Aaron Eckhart, photographed
exclusively for *Empire* at
The Soho Hotel, London,
on 10 October 2016.

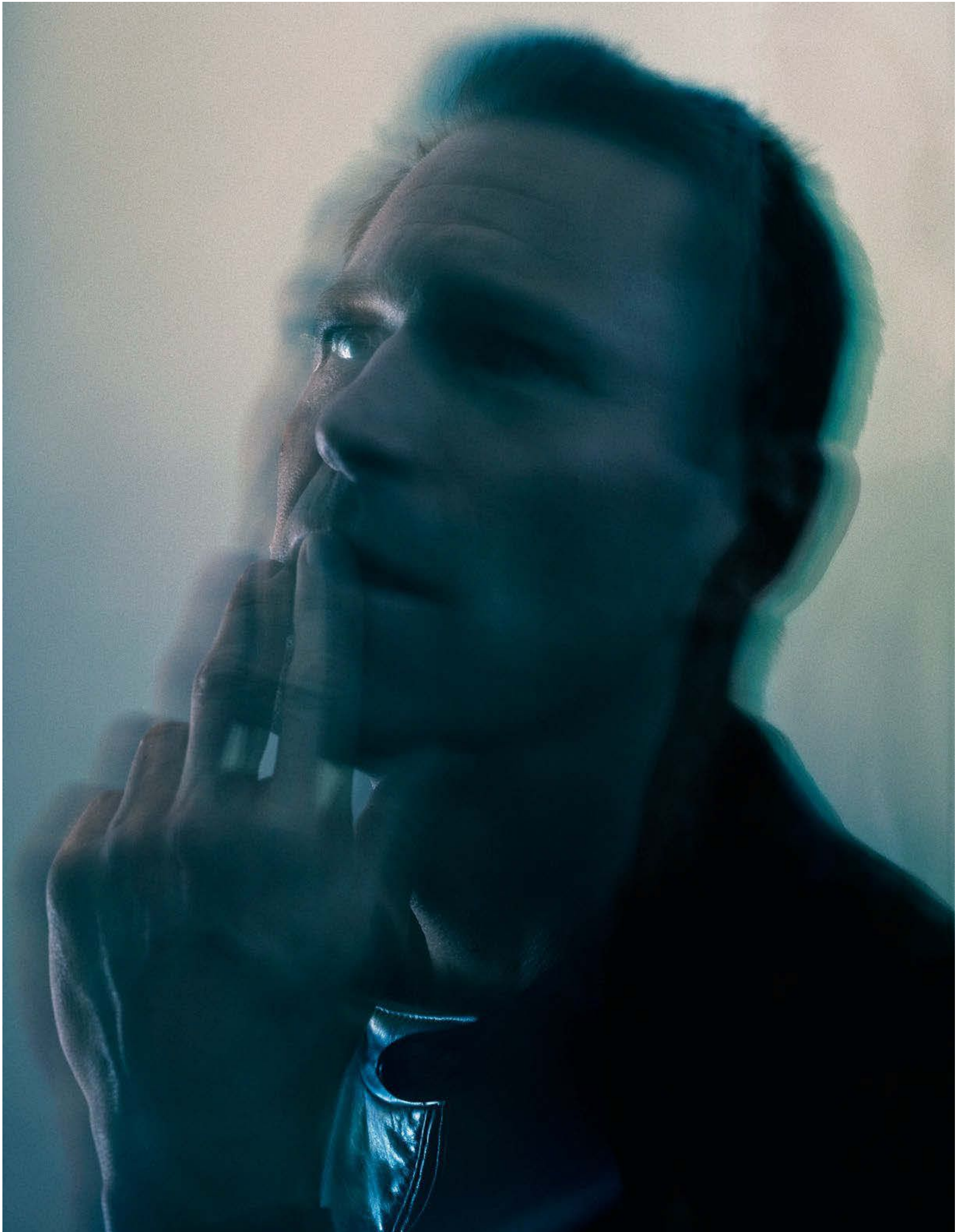


THE EMPIRE INTERVIEW

MAN OF MANY FACES

HE'S PLAYED MISOGYNISTS, CRACKED DISTRICT ATTORNEYS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. BACK WITH TWO FILMS THAT PUSH HIS LIMITS EVEN FURTHER, THE CHAMELEONIC **AARON ECKHART** LETS US IN ON HIS SECRETS

WORDS IAN FREER | PORTRAITS NADAV KANDER



“I FEEL LIKE I’M OUT OF PRISON”

begins Aaron Eckhart when *Empire* suggests he is having a ‘moment’. “Careers go in different ways. Sometimes you’re up and sometimes you’re down. Having this happen in my life now, when I’m 48, is special. This will probably never happen again.”

The star is referring to his roles in two very different movies. In Clint Eastwood’s *Sully*, he plays co-pilot Jeff Skiles, who helped land a passenger plane on the Hudson River after birds took out the engine. But, more impressively, in Ben Younger’s upcoming *Bleed For This*, he plays Kevin Rooney, a washed-up boxing trainer who finds redemption helping Vinny Pazienza (Miles Teller) get back in the ring after a potentially paralyzing car accident. With a paunch, a stoop and a balding head, Eckhart is borderline unrecognisable. “The first thing Ben said to me was, ‘Aaron, do you want to be great?’” he remembers. “And I said, ‘Yeah, I want to be great.’” The result: some of the best reviews of his life.

“It’s palpable when the media doesn’t like a movie,” he smiles. “It’s hard not to get defensive sometimes and say, ‘Hey, man, we did our best.’ Now it’s just the opposite — their energy is overflowing. It makes me happy.”

In town for *Empire*’s BFI London Film Festival *Bleed For This* gala screening, a relaxed Eckhart is back at fighting weight, looking trim in a simple grey jumper and expensive jeans. As he stands to greet us, six-foot-tall and with a jaw squarer than a Rubik’s Cube, he looks more like a Brett or a Troy than an Aaron. But it’s been a trademark of Eckhart’s nearly 20-year career that he has subsumed his good looks and easy-going personality into a range of compelling, disparate characters. These range from Chad, the cruel middle manager who manipulates a deaf woman in *In The Company Of Men*, to George, Erin’s kind-hearted biker boyfriend in *Erin Brockovich*, to Harvey Dent, the Gotham DA who becomes the hideously scarred Two-Face in *The Dark Knight*. It’s a career marked by challenges accepted and conquered — and *Bleed For This* marks his biggest transformation to date.

How did you approach the physical aspect of *Bleed For This*?

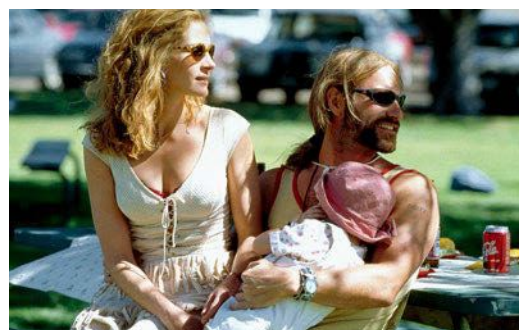
I had done it twice before [*in 1998 morality tale Your Friends & Neighbors and 2007 comedy Meet Bill*] and initially didn’t want to do it again. I was pretty skinny when I started the movie, so I gained 18kg. That may not sound like much, but it’s a lot of weight. Three months before the shoot, I went from training every single day and eating very judiciously to completely stopping my training and eating pizza voraciously. Imagine what that does to your psyche, your movements, how you perceive yourself, how others perceive you. All that got me into Kevin Rooney’s headspace. And obviously shaving your head helps.

How did the people in your life react to you looking like that?

My girlfriend, who is a professional triathlete, a world-class athlete, just pretended to continue finding me attractive. We went for a walk around Rhode Island, where we shot, and I had to go into a drug store and buy baby powder to stop my legs chafing. Because I am not used to seeing myself that way or feeling that way, I would make constant excuses for how I looked. No matter what she said to me, she could not convince me that she thought I was attractive. There are some women who find that look attractive. I’m not going to say one way is better than the other.

Why is it important to you that you do all that work?

Because that’s my character. Because that’s my craft. Because that’s going to give the audience a better experience. It makes my job more fun. And it also shows my director that I’m committed to the part. It pushes everybody around me to do their best. The effect it has is immeasurable. It says, “We are here to play. We’ve come to tell this story right.” >



From top to bottom: With Miles Teller in *Bleed For This*; *The Dark Knight*’s Harvey Dent goes Two-Face; Squirring Julia Roberts in *Erin Brockovich*; Up close with Gerard Butler in *Olympus Has Fallen*; *Sully*’s Jeff Skiles.



"I'M NOT AFRAID TO BE BRAZEN. AND I AM GOOD AT IT."

Neil LaBute once said, "Aaron Eckhart's got a leading man's face, but he's really a character actor." What do you make of that?

I've always felt I was more of a character person. If you base your career on your looks, you are doomed to have a short career. For *Your Friends & Neighbors*, I gained 20kg. And that character couldn't get it up. I made a conscious effort to play the opposite of a square-jawed, all-American guy. But I have never been secure in my looks. I have lots of insecurities. People look at me and say, "Hey, you have no problem getting girls and everything must be easy for you." Neither of those two things are true — at least in my mind, and that's what is important.

Thinking of *In The Company Of Men* and *Thank You For Smoking*, why have you been regularly cast as Bastard In A Suit?

I'm good at it. I'm not afraid to say audacious things and be unapologetic about it. There is an exhilaration you get from being politically incorrect and not caring. Look at Donald Trump or look at Simon Cowell. There's a certain energy that comes with this brazenness. It's attractive on screen. And I am good at it. I am willing to be a prick.

In 2001, Sean Penn directed you and Jack Nicholson in *The Pledge*. How was that?

Just one of the great experiences of my life. There was a scene where I had to get a confession out of Benicio Del Toro's character, a guy who is mentally challenged, who may or may not have committed the murder, who is not going to confess to it. I had no idea how this fucking scene was going to go. We begin doing it and I start rubbing his stomach, petting his hair and talking to him like a baby. Between takes, I go out and Jack is watching on CCTV television. He leans over to me and says, "Christ, you practically blew him." I died laughing. I said, "Jack, you have to say that in the movie." And — boom — it's in the movie.

You re-invented yourself again to play biker George in *Erin Brockovich*, a character who has a committed female following...

I remember I started with a full beard, but Steven [Soderbergh] came up to me and said, "It doesn't look mean enough." So we artistically started chipping away at it. I didn't try to make George an attractive person. It always surprises me when people say they love George. It didn't occur to me. It's my job to blend in and play the character, not for any ulterior motives.

What did you make of Soderbergh?

He is a consummate filmmaker. There was one moment that made a big impression on me. I was standing on set watching and waiting, in my own thoughts, and Steven just came up and stood next to me. Didn't say anything, didn't look at me. He just stood there with me. That has made such an impression on my career and how I think

about directors, because he was with me. He was with me. He...was... with... me.

You also worked with Brian De Palma, playing Detective Lee Blanchard in *The Black Dahlia*. Did you get on with him?

I enjoyed De Palma a lot. A scene got cut where I interrogate somebody and attack them. During one take, I got pretty physical. I didn't hurt the actor, but I was savage — and he got quite scared. De Palma likes that. He is not afraid of stuff like that.

When Christopher Nolan offered you the role of Harvey Dent/Two-Face in *The Dark Knight*, were you surprised it was such a complex role?

Chris didn't write a script; he wrote a novel. How do you give Batman, the Joker, Two-Face and Commissioner Gordon all roles that are fleshed out, with three dimensions? It's impossible, right? And every word that Chris wrote ended up on screen, which is unprecedented. At first, when they asked me to play Two-Face, I thought it was going to be a small role because the Joker was in it. But I read the script and went, "Woah, this is real." In a sense, he is the same as Batman, avenging his ill-begotten fate. He uses those feelings in a bad way in the end, but look at what happened to him. Can we not just empathise with him in some way? I've never seen Harvey as a villain.

Nolan once described you as having the "aura of a good man pushed too far".

That's very well said. That's why I always eat enough and why I always get enough sleep — because I'm on the verge!

Perhaps your most daring role was as a paedophile in Alan Ball's *Towelhead* in 2007. Many actors would avoid that.

Playing a paedophile is very uncomfortable, but I told Alan I wasn't going to short-shrift him. There's an actor's technique: 'substitute it with your girlfriend'. At the end of the day I am looking at a 15-year-old girl and the audience don't know I am thinking about my girlfriend. They are just watching me play my game on her. It was tough, but I'm never shy about those things. If I'm going to commit to it, I commit to it. But there are some things that, as an actor, I don't want to touch.

Such as?

I've done it before [in 2004's *Suspect Zero*], but playing a serial killer is an area I don't want to get into. I know now where I'm going to have to go to prepare to play one. Though if Fincher comes in, am I gonna say no?

Is it true that, as preparation for *Sully*, you recreated the fateful flight in a simulator?

We had the actual flight plan. We took off, ascended to 3,000 feet and — BOOM! — the birds hit us. Which was astonishing each time.

How lifelike is it?

I wish we'd had it while we were filming. Your body behaves unconsciously and you physically have a reaction. You hear the whine of the engines and then silence, which is a pilot's worst nightmare. Tom [Hanks] and I tried to land the plane in the simulator. Obviously, we didn't come close. We crashed it all over the place. I did better than Tom.

A lot of the chat around *Sully* seems to be focused on your moustache.

It's true. If you go on Twitter and search for "Sully moustache" — my girlfriend did this, I didn't do it — the most play I am getting for *Sully* is for my moustache. "The real Oscar belongs to Aaron's moustache"... "The best acting in the movie was Aaron's moustache." Which is all fine by me. It came from my own loins.

At the far end of the scale from the awards-talk material, you've made movies like *The Core* and *London Has Fallen*. Does it feel different from doing the serious stuff?

I always approach it the same way. One hundred per cent. If there's a death scene, whether it's in an action movie or a sci-fi movie or a horror movie, I always approach it the same way.

But in the best sense, those films are ludicrous...

What do you mean? Going to the centre of the Earth in purple spacesuits? How dare you! Look, people love them. And everybody involved, from top to bottom, has to convince themselves that what they are doing has a purpose, so they can fully engage with the process. There are different reasons for doing different movies. Look at *I, Frankenstein*. I got to learn [Filipino martial art] Kali for six months for that. We gave it a shot. I was in the Virgin Airlines lounge the other day and this woman came up to me and said, "You are *I, Frankenstein*! I love it!" So for me all the effort was worth it because of this woman. We don't know how we affect people.

Do you enjoy the '*Has Fallen*' films?

Gerry [Butler]'s part and my part are different. I would like to have more of his fun and shoot everybody. I always say my perfect job would be to run around, grunt and save the world. Who doesn't want to do that?

BLEED FOR THIS IS OUT TBC 2017

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S 40 GREATEST FILMS

40 YEARS AFTER THE MASTER'S FINAL FILM,
EMPIRE PRESENTS THE 40 MOVIES YOU MUST SEE TO UNDERSTAND
HIS CAREER'S TRIUMPHS, TROUGHS AND TRAJECTORIES...

WORDS MICHAEL ADAMS





40 UNDER CAPRICORN (1949)

Here's the answer to the pub trivia question, "Which Hitchcock film is set in Australia?" More curio than classic, this suspense-free melodrama returns us to Sydney 1831, where Michael Wilding's colonial newbie woos Ingrid Bergman's boozy and nutty Lady Henrietta, much to the consternation of her gruff hubby Joseph Cotten. The Technicolor's lovely but there's too much emotional horizon-gazing from Bergman and Cotten, while Hitch's post-Rope 10-minute takes are technical wizardry in the service of too little.

39 THE PLEASURE GARDEN (1925)

Hitch's directorial debut is a stagey silent melodrama about the trials and tragedies of two showgirls. What makes it worthwhile these days is as a cinematic crystal ball that'd anticipate much of what was to come in his career, from the obsession with blondes (pretty much every movie), to the graceful spiral staircase shot (*The Lodger*, *Vertigo*) and even more specific bits like Miles Mander's villain's murders and murderous attempts (*Young And Innocent*, *Sabotage*).

38 MURDER! (1930)

Norah Baring is an actress accused of murdering a rival, found bloodstained and all, and a conflicted jury eventually decides on her guilt and that she should hang. Anticipating *Dial M*, it's only then that investigation into other possible suspects begins, with Herbert Marshall's dissenting juror utilising the skills of the theatre, presaging the plot of *Stage Fright*. A fun one, on its own twisting merits, and for spotting emerging Hitchcock tropes.

37 STAGE FRIGHT (1950)

Set in the theatre world, this has Jonathan Cooper as a cad suspected of murdering his diva mistress Marlene Dietrich's husband. Jane Wyman is the naif who unravels the truth by playing amateur detective and using her acting skills to pose as a cleaner. Some argue the extremely unreliable narrator is a cheat that renders much of the film redundant. But it's hard to get too worked up over a funhouse flick this frivolous and forgettable.

36 TORN CURTAIN (1966)

Two killer set pieces (a brutal farmhouse murder; an escape from a ship) and two off-kilter ones (a chalkboard algebra duel; a slow bus chase) mark and mar this political thriller that has Paul Newman's scientist defecting to East Berlin, bewildering his miscast love Julie Andrews, if not an audience always a few steps ahead of the action. Solidly entertaining but, at 129 minutes, also a victim of mid-1960s bloat.



Karen Black wears black. She'd be more conspicuous if her name was Karen Fluoro.

35 FAMILY PLOT (1976)

Proof that the New American Cinema of the 1970s had a slight impact on Hitch, *Family Plot* has a touch of the shaggy-dog Robert Altman vibe to it. Taxi driver Bruce Dern and fake-psycho girlfriend Barbara Harris are small-time scammers trying to locate a long-lost heir and score a reward. What they don't know is that said dude is a criminal with a murderous past who's behind a series of high-

stakes jewel robberies — and he'll do anything to prevent exposure. This screwy thriller is rife with delicious ironies, eccentric plotting and lovely loose performances from Dern and Harris, along with a memorably villain in William Devane and oddly sympathetic work from Karen Black as his partner. It's fitting that the flick's last scene finishes with Harris winking at the audience. The only way it could've been more fitting would've been if Hitch had engineered it to be his final cameo.



34 TOPAZ (1969)

While even longer than *Torn Curtain*, this works better because it's almost two movies in one. The first half involves spy shenanigans in New York and Cuba, while the second exposes a Soviet spy ring in the French government. It's engrossing, interest is added by the real-life Cuban Missile Crisis backdrop, and Frederick Stafford is complex as our Gallic hero while former Bond femme fatale Karin Dor is tragically great as a Cuban freedom fighter.

33 BLACKMAIL (1929)

Hitch's first talkie holds up as a wrong-woman thriller, anticipating *Dial M* with its guilty-not-guilty heroine blackmailed after killing the man who tried to rape her. Again we see foreshadowing of future flicks, from the

amusingly droll discussion of murder (*Shadow Of A Doubt*, *Strangers On A Train*) to the climactic rooftop monument moment at the British Museum (refined in *Saboteur*, *To Catch A Thief* and *North By Northwest*).

32 MARNIE (1964)

Like *Psycho*, *Marnie* starts with a blonde robbing her employer. Only this time, she's Tippi Hedren and, rather than becoming the coincidental victim of a serial killer, she's blackmailed into becoming Sean Connery's plaything. *Marnie* works as a cat-and-mouse thriller until the plot has him raping her, losing our sympathies and making his challenges to get to the root of her psychological problems an exercise in hypocritical redemption.

31 THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1956)

Lovely to behold, thanks to great location work, and to hear, thanks to Doris Day's *Que Sera, Sera*. But this remake of Hitch's 1934 original sometimes lacks urgency, even though Jimmy Stewart and Day make for a sympathetic couple as they try to save their kidnapped son from the clutches of a spy ring. The Albert Hall sequence is a virtuosic feat of editing for wordless suspense, though the film needed a Peter Lorre-level baddie. >

30 MR. & MRS. SMITH (1941)

Hitch's only attempt at a straight-out comedy isn't as funny as some of his other flicks, but it has charm to burn, thanks to leads Robert Montgomery and Carole Lombard, in what was the last film released before her death in a plane crash. They're a feuding couple who discover their marriage is invalid due to a legal technicality; he desperately wants back in but she's not so sure.

29 SECRET AGENT (1936)

Not to be confused with Hitch's other 1936 film based on Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, this one has John Gielgud as a WWI hero whose death is faked so he can assume a new identity and carry out an assassination. The action is brisk and intriguing and Gielgud and Madeleine Carroll spar nicely. But Peter Lorre steals the show as "The General", an amusingly amoral bucket of slime.

28 I CONFESS (1953)

Hitch's idea of suspense was that audience should know everything while the characters remain oblivious. Here he mixed things up: hero priest Montgomery Clift learns the truth about a murder in confession but can't speak out even as he becomes the prime suspect. The mood is tortured, thanks to gloomy Quebec City location work and broody Clift, with the film at its most effective when his ostracism reaches its peak after a surprise court verdict.

27 THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY (1955)

Harry is dead and no-one can agree on the method of his disposal. Hitch delights in his main joke: none of his film's lovely characters is troubled in the least by this loss of life. Shot in the richest of colours, this blackest of comedies is shot through with Code-baiting innuendos. Shirley Maclaine is all breathy carnality as the girl who can't be kissed too passionately because she has an, ahem, "short fuse".

26 FRENZY (1972)

The least aesthetically pleasant of Hitch's films, this is a grimly effective psycho thriller that has Jon Finch suspected of being a serial killer responsible for strangling women with a necktie. There's one really ghastly murder that might not pass censorship today, which is offset by another one-take killing that ranks among Hitch's most subtle moments. It's tense, exciting and inexorable, though a little undercut by a hero who's compelling but charmless.

25 YOUNG AND INNOCENT (1937)

This caper has wrong man Derrick De Marney and smart blonde Nova Pilbeam traversing the British countryside to try to find the real murderer of a singing star. Great shock (the opening five minutes), suspense (a mine collapses beneath a car) and comedy (our couple get stuck in a kids birthday party) sequences qualify this as one of Hitch's underrated gems. Okay, so the inclusion of blackface in the finale might not fly these days.

24 THE LODGER (1927)

Despite his earlier efforts, this silent thriller is heralded as the first true Hitchcock film and it's hard to argue against that conclusion. From the first scene of a screaming blonde becoming the latest victim of serial killer The Avenger to the wrong-man machinations that comprise the story thereafter, it's possible to see many of the director's most famous works hinted at here. So, too, the narrative's explicit links between sex and death (title card dialogue — "Be careful, I'll get you yet"; "When I've put a rope round the Avenger's neck... I'll put a ring round Daisy's finger." — still packs a punch) and the director's German Expressionism-inspired technical achievements (shadows and strange perspectives abound; POV shots keep us guessing; there's a spectacular top-down shot of a hand on a spiral staircase; and, of course, the famous glass-ceiling shot to show the suspect relentlessly pacing above the heads of those who think him a murderer). Even much-criticised star Ivor Novello's detached manner and soft good looks call to mind Anthony Perkins, as does the scene featuring June Tripp taking a steamy bath as he lurks about creepily. Call this the *Psycho* of early cinema — at least until Fritz Lang made *M*.

23 THE PARADINE CASE (1947)

Sensuous cinematography marks Hitch's most noir film in style and substance, with Gregory Peck's lawyer risking everything as he obsessively defends a woman accused of murdering her husband. This works as a slow-burn whodunit with complex motives, thanks to a fierce and focused Alida Valli and the schadenfreude found in watching stoic Peck unravel. But Ann Todd owns the show as Peck's wife, creating one of Hitch's most sympathetically real female characters.



22 THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1934)

Hitch's original clocks in at just 75 minutes, wasting not a moment in throwing Leslie Banks

and Edna Best up against spies intent on carrying out an assassination. Peter Lorre, despite doing his lines phonetically, is unforgettable as villain Abbott, while, unusually for then and now, Best gets to save the day with her gun skills. The awesome chair-fight scene, which rivals *They Live* for sheer insanity, is worth the price of admission.

21 ROPE (1948)

Hitch constructed this, his first Technicolor film, out of eight 10-minute takes. Bravo — but the story of John Dall and Farley Granger's closeted lovers committing the perfect murder to prove their superiority is chilly and not helped by James Stewart's putative hero being almost as sociopathic. Suspense here is visceral rather than emotional because we're not invested in their fates from the murderous first frames onwards through their dysfunctional dinner party.

20 REBECCA (1940)

Priggish Laurence Olivier tries to get over the death of his wife Rebecca by marrying giddy Joan Fontaine, only for the weight of the past to threaten to crush them, with an assist from Judith Anderson's creepy housekeeper and oily blackmailer George Sanders. After an opening that's almost a romantic comedy, this goes for gothic atmospherics over suspense, with the overall effect being a truly haunting if non-supernatural ghost story.



If Ivor Novello doesn't want to be mistaken for a serial killer, he shouldn't wear a scarf over his face.

19 SPELLBOUND (1945)

A true psychological thriller, this works Freudian theory into a scenario with amnesia, fake identities and a wrong-man murder hunt. Ingrid Bergman is the brilliant headshrinker trying to prove Gregory Peck is innocent of a killing he himself believes he committed. Nerve-wrackingly plotted, it disorients with a Dali-designed dream sequence and conductor Miklós Rózsa's woozy use of the theremin, before delivering deeply satisfying climax that culminates with a mindblowing moment for the villain.

18 FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

(1940)

This has Joel McCrea as an American crime reporter sent to cover the build-up to WWII in Europe. He's a solid hero, fantastically supported by character actors Herbert Marshall, George Sanders and Robert Benchley, who was one of many hands involved in writing a very funny script and scenario that bursts with superb set-pieces, many of which would be refined into elements of *Lifeboat*, *Notorious* and *North By Northwest*. This lost 1941's Best Picture — to Hitch's *Rebecca*.



17 TO CATCH A THIEF (1955)

Quiche Lorraine is referenced but this is more like a soufflé, with Hitchcock on narrative holiday as he focuses on the charms of the Riviera and the marvelous chemistry between his impossibly beautiful leads Cary Grant and Grace Kelly. It's glorious, gorgeous and incredibly slight, with the story of The Cat burgling the rich and framing Grant wafer-thin even by the most relaxed McGuffin standards.



Listen all y'all, it's Oskar Homolka and Sylvia Sidney in *Sabotage*.

16 SABOTAGE (1936)

Walt Disney, Joseph Conrad and Alfred

Hitchcock — united at last! Based on Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and featuring an animated sequence by Disney, this is the film that contains the bomb-on-the-bus sequence often invoked by Hitch to describe what he meant by suspense. Sylvia Sidney's wonderful wounded Betty Boop vibe suits her role as the wife of Oskar Homolka's cinema owner, suspected by Scotland Yard detective John Loder of being part of a terrorist organisation unleashing devastating attacks on London. Even today, this film's most famous sequence shocks as a total rule-breaker, with the scene all the more jaw-dropping for Hitch's black-comic cut to his leads laughing uproariously. The filmmaker later regretted his decision to include this sequence. He was wrong to second guess himself: it's the very audaciousness that makes *Sabotage* work. Also wonderful: the opening expressionistic montage; the near-riot at the cinema and underrated Loder's comic defusing of the situation; throwaway eccentric moments in the aquarium and bird shop; Sidney's final showdown with Homolka and the Blackmail-style absolution that wraps satisfyingly closes the film. >

15 SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1943)

While *The Lodger* held its cards tightly, *Shadow* doesn't fool with us for long before confirming that Joseph Cotton's Uncle Charlie, come to hide out with his extended family, isn't just a small-time crook but a nihilistic serial killer. The suspense comes from the cat-and-mouse game he plays with his suspicious niece, played by the remarkable Teresa Wright, while comic relief is offered by Henry Travers and Hume Cronyn as the crime-obsessed cronies who can't spot the killer.



14 SUSPICION (1941)

It's apt that a coin toss decides the couple's first date in this thriller because we're kept guessing until the finale as to what we're really seeing. Cary Grant's knife-edge performance won't let us decide if he's just a chancer or a killer in the making. Joan Fontaine is the lovestruck lass who falls for him, only to suspect he's going to snuff her for whatever money he can get. You'll never believe a glass of milk could be so sinister.

12 THE WRONG MAN (1956)

While Hitch had long toyed with wrong-man stories, when he used the phrase as a title it was for his only film that tried to stay true to real events — as he promises in his on-camera intro. This has Henry Fonda as the poor sap who's repeatedly identified as a stick-up man, sending him into the labyrinth of the criminal justice system. It's scary stuff, even today, made all the more effective for its docudramatic style.



Priscilla Lane and Robert Cummings in *Saboteur*, granddaddy of *North By Northwest*.

13 SABOTEUR (1942)

This fast comic thriller was a dry run for *North By Northwest*. Robert Cummings is wrongly accused of being a pro-Nazi saboteur and takes off on a cross-country mission to find the true bad guys, reluctantly helped by model Priscilla Lane. We get plenty of sharp repartee (some penned by Dorothy Parker), a cast of wild supporting characters, (including an entire convoy of circus performers) and increasingly breathless action (the finale atop the Statue Of Liberty would be refined for *NBN*).



Jessica Tandy, Tippi Hedren and Veronica Cartwright are the birds in *The Birds*.

08 THE BIRDS (1963)

If only the original ending, of the Golden Gate Bridge covered with birds had been kept, Hitch's flick would've had an even more apocalyptic vibe. As is, it's still terrifically frightening. After a teasing build, giving us Rod Taylor and Tippi Hedren to care about, there's a sharp escalation in attacks, each more visceral than the last, with the kids playground, town fire and farmhouse sequences indelible, not least for the nerve-shredding sound design.

11 THE 39 STEPS (1935)

This one — with a story not far removed from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* — has Robert Donat, aided by blonde Madeleine Carroll, on wrong-man duty. He's falsely accused of murdering a spy and given secrets that he needs to follow to the Scottish highlands if he's to clear his name and save England. What we see here is Hitch's first true unification of his silent expressionist skills with snappy, dialogue-driven storytelling in his favoured scenario.

10 LIFEBOAT (1944)

Despite being rooted in WWII, *Lifeboat* remains relevant for its focus on how we treat captured enemies. The premise has the survivors of a torpedoed allied ship sharing a lifeboat with the Nazi U-boat commander responsible for their predicament. Tallulah Bankhead steams up the screen as a sharp-tongued reporter and she gets strong support, especially from Walter Slezak as the German. Hitch creates an ever-shifting, always dangerous little world of shifting alliances and deteriorating morality that remains thrilling and scarily resonant.



09 THE LADY VANISHES (1938)

The funniest of Hitch's films, particularly in its cheekily ribald first act, *The Lady Vanishes* is also a timelessly entertaining thriller. Margaret Lockwood is the English tourist whose elderly travelling companion disappears on board a moving train, only for everyone around her to insist the old woman never existed in the first place. The riddle and resolution doesn't make a lot of sense, but this zips along so merrily that we immediately forgive any and all logical flaws.

07 NOTORIOUS (1946)

Agent Cary Grant convinces Ingrid Bergman, daughter of a traitor, to infiltrate a Nazi gang planning a post-WWII nuclear comeback. But to do so she'll have to give herself to Claude Rains's suavely sinister Hitler-ite, despite having fallen for Grant, who can't admit his feelings for her. Hitch's most emotional film, *Notorious* also delivers nailbiting suspense, particularly in the champagne cellar sequence and an ironic Expressionist finale that does Fritz Lang proud.

06 STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951)

After a fanciful discussion about "exchanging murders", Robert Walker's psycho takes it upon himself to kill tennis pro Farley Granger's estranged wife. Paranoia builds as our man is stalked by the murderer and put under the police spotlight. Hitch flirts with noir, piles on droll humour and elicits an awesomely villainous performance from Walker, who sadly died before the film was released. The finale — on an out-of-control carousel — is cinema at its most thrilling. >

Anthony Dawson
goes sneaky-sneaky
behind Grace Kelly.

05 DIAL M FOR MURDER (1954)

Like a *Strangers* spin-off, with Ray Milland as the former tennis pro who convinces an old acquaintance to kill his wife Grace Kelly. Released in 3D, which wasn't necessary but which holds up well on modern TVs, *Dial* offers the most drum-tight plotting of any Hitchcock. Almost to the last, every wrong turn turns out right for Milland, keeping us breathlessly wondering how Grace can possibly avoid her death sentence. As in *Notorious*, a key is key.



04 REAR WINDOW (1954)

Nearly as pretty as *Vertigo* and offering more narrative coherence, this has Jimmy Stewart as another obsessive, though his voyeurism is played with a lighter touch, tempered by the toleration of firm-minded girlfriend Grace Kelly and leads towards the capture of a murderer, rather than providing cover for a killer's escape. Hitch's massive set is a marvel, as is his fusion of his own fetishes with commentary on the act of filmmaking and viewing.


03 VERTIGO (1958)

While Hitchcock was eventually reappraised by critics, the movement to declare *Vertigo* not just his best but the best American film ever made feels like an over-correction. Make no mistake: it is gorgeous, intriguing and gets under your skin more than his other movies. But *Vertigo* also frustrates: the con that sets up Jimmy Stewart can't withstand scrutiny; his obsession with reappearing Kim Novak fascinates and alienates in equal measure; as does her apparent lack of guilt over being accomplice to a murder. Cineastes, discuss!



02 PSYCHO (1960)

The vicious stab wound to the heart of modern cinema challenged everything audiences had relied on, with Janet Leigh's mid-film demise explicitly doing what Hitch teased at in *Vertigo*. Shit got real and there was no going back, only forwards into a dark new reality. In this case it was one dictated by insanity wearing the innocent mask of Tony Perkins. Even though you know better, you can't help hope that this time, somehow, Marion makes it back to Phoenix.




"It's Cary Grant in the lead, Crop Duster is closing fast, but Cary Grant holds on to win by a nose."

01

NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959)

Everything Hitch did best comes together in this pure pop masterpiece that's as rewatchable as any film ever made. Cary Grant is cinema's most loveable falsely accused fugitive, a glib Madison Avenue Man mistaken for a spy in the first five minutes of the film and thereafter on the run from the cops and sophisticated villain James Mason and his reptilian henchman Martin Landau. The set-pieces — UN stabbing, cornfield cropduster chase, art auction outrage, vertiginous Mount Rushmore finale — are justifiably famous, but the charming, witty and sensuous smaller moments between them

are every bit as indelible. The incredible, innuendo-laden scenes Grant shares with Eva Marie Saint are the greatest of these, with the mellifluous tonal battles between Grant, Mason and Landau running a close second. While *North By Northwest* tops our list, the real achievement is that it, *Psycho* and *Vertigo* were released back-to-back. They undoubtedly comprise the greatest hat-trick in cinema history, offering some of the art form's most celebrated dialogue, performances, cinematography, set design and costumes, all announced by Saul Bass's title design and set to Bernard Herrmann's dizzying scores. 



THE LIGHT KNIGHT

FROM BAT-HIGHS TO BAT-LOWS, ADAM WEST REFLECTS
ON 50 YEARS OF BEING THE CAPED CRUSADER

WORDS ALEX GODFREY





“BREDFIN”

booms Adam West. Right from the moment he greets *Empire*, on the phone from his Idaho home, the star is exactly as playful and off-the-wall as you'd hope. “A title like *Empire*, it's so grand!” he declares. “Is it the Byzantine Empire, the Roman Empire...?” Everything's a hoot; nothing's taken too seriously — each time he catches himself dwelling on something, he exaggerates it for comedic effect. He's pure, uncut Adam West. And by Adam West, of course, we mean Batman.

West has been synonymous with the character now for five decades. His *Batman* TV show was first broadcast on the ABC network in January 1966, followed six months later by a film. Since then, West has been inseparable from his do-gooding, super-droll take on the Caped Crusader. Having created a wholly unique vocal delivery, he's long since adopted it as his natural speaking voice. “Alright,” he says as we get down to business, “this is Batman the elder.” Indeed. He's 88. And he's just played Batman again.

Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders is a brand-new, feature-length animated take on '60s Batman, voiced by three of the original cast members: West as the Dark Knight, Burt Ward as Robin, and Julie Newmar as Catwoman. It was made to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the show, and happily the original tone — the irreverence, the self-awareness, the sheer ridiculousness of it all — remains intact.

“I thought, ‘My God, it's about *time* you guys called me up!’” says West about being approached for the project. “And it's just nice to be back! What goes around comes around, you know.”

West was 37 when Batman burst into his world. A jobbing actor, he'd just done a stint in Europe making Spaghetti Westerns, and had recently starred in a film called *Robinson Crusoe On Mars*. But it was a TV ad for Nestlé, in which West played a smooth, wisecracking character called Captain Quik, that bagged him his new gig.

The commercial was seen by producer William Dozier, the man hired by the ABC network to bring DC Comics' *Batman* to the screen. Dozier and writer Lorenzo Semple Jr had been grappling with the adaptation, finally deciding to push silliness to the fore. *Batman* would mix colourful action with deadpan satire, paying tribute to its comic-book heritage while simultaneously parodying it. And as soon as Dozier saw West arching a wry eyebrow on his TV, he knew they had their hero. West, though, was initially hesitant. “My agent said, ‘Kid, you gotta see them, they're interested in ya,’” he remembers. “I said, ‘What's it called, Lou?’ He said, ‘*Batman*.’ I said, ‘Really? I'm trying to have





Clockwise from top left: Bruce Wayne (Adam West) and Robin (Burt Ward) in 1966's *Batman* TV series; West and Ward reprise their roles in this year's *Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders*; Batman tools up in April 1966's 'While Gotham City Burns'; Batman shows the crims who's boss, 1966.

a serious career here.' But I got curious."

He read the pilot, thought it was hilarious, and successfully screentested. Burt Ward, meanwhile, was a 19-year-old karate blackbelt, fresh out of college and selling real estate. More than 1,000 actors auditioned for Robin, but watch Ward's exuberant test online and you can see why he got the part. Having brought a friend, he does some glorified somersaults, throws the friend over his shoulder, then says, "I'm gonna give an exhibition of karate," before smashing a board with his hand.

Right from day one, West brought his own ludicrous rhythms to the character: he'd move slowly and ponderously as Batman mused over a clue, then *erupt* with adrenaline when he deciphered it. Not every network executive was impressed. "I got many notes, many memos, many phone calls," West says. "'Kid, what are you doing?! Don't do that!' And I said, 'Well, I'm sorry, I have to do it this way or it's not going to last, or be funny for the adults.' I saw the humour in it." Upon viewing the first dailies, the crew agreed.

The first-ever episode, 'Hi Diddle Riddle', set out the show's stall. After a cake explodes in the Moldavian Prime Minister's face, revealing a riddle, Commissioner Gordon (Neil Hamilton) and Chief O'Hara (Stafford Repp) summon Batman, who pursues the Riddler (Frank Gorshin) with Robin. They're led to the What A Way To Go-Go discotheque, where Batman, in full garb, gets down with a seductive siren, putting an improvised spin on '60s dance craze the Watusi. Then his drink is spiked, and the episode ends on a cliffhanger, the drugged Batman useless as Robin is strapped to a table. "Is this the ghastly end of our dynamic duo?" asks the narration (voiced by Dozier). It was, of course, only the beginning.

West, reminiscing about his favourite moments, brings up his dance from this episode, later dubbed 'the Batusi'. As we move on to another subject, he interjects, "I can still do it!" He enthuses about the show's vibrancy. "As an homage to the earlier comic books — the more innocent comic books, if you will — we used a lot of primary colours," he says. "Colours that people like [Roy] Lichtenstein were using. We were trying to reflect the times, even with the music. Batman had a surfing contest with the Joker — I thought that was really funny."

Airing on 12 January 1966, 'Hi Diddle Riddle' seized an immense 52 per cent audience share. For the rest of the first season, two episodes were aired a week, getting equally massive viewing figures. The show was nominated for three Emmys, and was responsible for shifting \$75 million-worth of Batman merchandise (hello, Joker dog costume and Batman snuggie) in America that year. Half of Hollywood wanted to appear on the show, with guest stars including Shelley Winters, Otto Preminger, Vincent Price and Liberace; for less demanding cameos, the likes of Sammy Davis Jr and Jerry Lewis would pop out of windows as Batman and Robin unconvincingly scaled buildings.

The *Batman* movie was, admitted Semple Jr, a cash-in. He wrote it in four weeks, only ever doing one draft. The big gimmick, somewhat foreshadowing *Suicide Squad*, saw the TV show's four biggest villains team up: the Joker (Cesar Romero), the Riddler (Frank Gorshin), the Penguin (Burgess Meredith) and Catwoman (Lee Meriwether, temporarily replacing the otherwise engaged Julie Newmar).

At \$1.5 million, the budget was pumped-up, enabling the crew to build a new Batcopter and Batboat. But the shoot, like the writing period, was shockingly fast. Beginning two weeks after the wrap party for the show's first season, it was completed in 26 days. Post-production, meanwhile, lasted under a month, with the film rocketed into cinemas on 30 July 1966. Despite all the haste, the film was well-received, with *Variety* citing its "uniformly impressively improbable" acting. Fans went crazy for several instantly iconic moments: Batman running around Santa Barbara pier trying to get rid of a bomb, Batman fighting >

off a shark with Shark-Repellent Bat Spray, and the United Nations Security Council (or, as they were called in the film, the United World Security Council) being turned to dust.

West and Ward were now big, blazing stars. "In a sense, I took advantage of it," West says, adding conspiratorially, "with all of the human pleasures that one could accrue." Ward has said the pair were "sexual vampires", especially during the personal appearances they made in costume at weekends, where he claims women were banging on their windows while they were in bed with other women. On one occasion, West and Gorshin attended a Los Angeles orgy, but were asked to leave, naked, when they began talking in character. (Hopefully they didn't also yell out, "SPLAT!" or, "ZOWIE!") Heading up the Batman phenomenon was, says West, intense.

But it didn't last. In part due to the film, the second season was rushed, and quality slipped. Season 3 fared even worse, and as ratings waned, budgets were cut. Kids were still watching, but the adults (who, with their spending power, were needed by ABC) had deserted, and the show was cancelled. NBC offered to fund a fourth season, but the \$800,000 sets had already been torn down and destroyed, so that was that: in 1968, after three years and 120 episodes, *Batman* was Batcanned.

The show rapidly faded from view. In 1970, DC editor Denny O'Neil revamped Batman, making him darker and broodier, in line with Bob Kane's original 1939 vision, but with a grittier tone to suit the new decade. The 1980s brought graphic novels, with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* firmly pushing the character into adult territory. All along, the Adam West show was used as an example of what not to do. Kane said the show's comedic tone had changed the genre for the worse. In an introduction to his book, Miller decried the show's quips. "For me," he wrote, "Batman was never funny."

As for West, having thought the show would make him an A-list star, he instead found it typecast him. Needing to work regardless, he did whatever films he could, ending up in the likes of *The Happy Hooker Goes Hollywood* and *Zombie Nightmare*. He continued to do appearances as Batman, reaching a personal low when he was fired out of a cannon at a carnival in Indiana. His bank account and self-respect went down, while his alcohol consumption and self-destruction went up. The bat had become an albatross.

"It's been sheer torture!" he says now, making light of his ups and downs. "We've got six children and I've had to keep working." In 1986 he moved with his family from LA to the Idaho farm where he still resides, among elk and bears. From there he saw his status as the sole screen Batman disappear. When Tim Burton's 1989 film was released, West said he was angry not to have been offered the role. "Even more painfully," he wrote in his 1994 autobiography *Back To The Batcave*, "our contribution to the legend was ignored, ridiculed and denigrated by certain of the filmmakers..."

As with every one of the '60s show's jeopardy-packed cliffhangers, however, there has been a happy ending. West's *Batman* has enjoyed a revival over the past few years, with a huge new wave of appreciation for the work. At conventions, West and Ward are given wild ovations, with fans telling emotional stories of what the show has meant to them. "To hear a judge or a janitor say that I made a difference in their life, that's marvellously rewarding," West says. "One man said I made him want to be a superhero, and he did the next best thing, which was to join the Marines." It made an equal impact on pop culture. In *Pulp Fiction*, John Travolta riffed on the Batuser on the Jack Rabbit Slim's dancefloor, while Nicolas Cage went full West as Big Daddy in *Kick-Ass*. Seth MacFarlane cast West as himself on *Family Guy*, while Hollywood stars regularly pay tribute (see right). When Christian Bale was asked in March this year by *Entertainment Tonight* to name his favourite Batman, he said, "You can't beat Adam West."

Batman: Return Of The Caped Crusaders brings it all full circle. "It took a little time," jokes West of slipping back into character. "About 20 seconds!" We ask if it felt good doing it, and for a while he gets serious. "That's a very good question," he says. "I didn't know whether it would. I just went in and did it. But as we went along I began to feel better about it." The film is funny, a refreshing rejection of the gloomier Batmen of recent years. "It's starting to heat up, Batman," worries Ward's Robin as the pair, strapped onto a massive replica buffet tray, are pushed into an oven. "But we do smell delicious." Meanwhile, for a sequence in which the dynamic duo battle the villains in space, Batman's astronaut's helmet features Bat-ears. Watching it, you're struck by how ridiculous the character really is, regardless of how gravely some may treat him. This is all about fun.

And it's not in isolation: in February we'll have *The LEGO Batman Movie*, which, with its knowing, self-parodying yucks takes more than a cue from 1966. In the past 50 years, West's Batman has been through a lot, but is back with a bang. *Return Of The Caped Crusaders* exists because of this renewed love of the original show and film, and the recontextualisation must feel good. "I never think of that more than twice a week," West deadpans. He laughs, then gets serious for a brief moment. "It's not a matter of being vindicated or anything else: it's just finally realising that people are recognising what I did. What we did. And appreciating it even more. And it keeps building. Every poll of your favourite Batman, I'm winning!"

He checks his ego, and laughs. "I sound like Trump, don't I? This is terrible." Not at all. Holy comeback, Batman! It's about time.

BATMAN: RETURN OF THE CAPED CRUSADERS IS OUT NOW ON DOWNLOAD, DVD AND BLU-RAY





HOLY BAT-FANS!

A-list Adam West aficionados

MARK HAMILL

Hamill grew up watching the *Batman* show, and years later, before it was available to buy, had Fox send him tapes of every episode.

"Adam is so underrated as an actor," he said recently. "He walked the line between sincerity and parody and set the tone."



NICOLAS CAGE

"Adam West was my favourite Batman,"

Cage once said. "I always wanted to be him." He achieved that by channelling the star in *Kick-Ass*. Later, when Jay Leno got them together on his talk-show, Cage said to West, "Thank you for saving my childhood."



JERRY SEINFELD

When asked in 2011 which TV series the comedian would take with him to a desert island, he chose *Batman*. "It's funny, it's got adventure, it's got some romance, it's very colourful and it's very upbeat," he said. "It made me happy when I was a kid."




CONAN O'BRIEN

The TV host is a huge fan, once taking his family to a convention to meet West. In 1991, O'Brien co-wrote and produced a hilarious pilot called *Lookwell*, starring West as an ex-TV detective who tries to solve crimes for the cops. Alas, NBC didn't pick it up for a series.



JJ ABRAMS

Batman was the first show to excite Abrams as a toddler. "I was just out of my fucking mind over *Batman*," he recalled. "I remember going into my first day of kindergarten and crying because I was so sad I was going to miss *Batman*... I couldn't get a breath."



Sammy Davis Jr joins Ward
and West in 'The Clock
King's Crazy Crimes',
12 October 1966.



Richard Kelly and Frank,
photographed exclusively
for *Empire* in Los Angeles,
on 15 September 2016.



Down the Rabbit Hole

A METAL-FACED BUNNY. A CHARLIE'S ANGEL. AN EXCITED CHRISTOPHER NOLAN.
ON ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY, THE CREATORS OF **DONNIE DARKO**
SHARE THE STRANGE STORY OF A CULT MOVIE'S BIRTH

WORDS **DAN JOLIN** PORTRAITS **STEVE SCHOFIELD**

IT WAS MAY 2002,

just seven months after his debut movie had died horribly, when Richard Kelly found himself on East 3rd Street in New York. He was lost in thought, still pondering how the metaphysical, science fiction high school drama *Donnie Darko*, over which he'd toiled and fought bitterly for years, could have flopped so badly the previous Hallowe'en. Then, as he passed a pizza joint named Two Boots on the corner of Avenue A, he saw a familiar face. The long-eared, metallic, smiling-skull visage of Frank the bunny stared at Kelly from the restaurant window.

Curious, Kelly stepped inside. "Why do you have my movie poster up?" he asked. Two Boots, it turned out, was affiliated with the single-screen Pioneer Theater next door. "We're playing your movie every Saturday at midnight," the manager told him. "It's sold out three Saturdays in a row."

The following Saturday, Kelly pitched up at 2am for a post-screening Q&A. What he saw overwhelmed him with emotion: not just a packed room but, he recalls now, "reporters with cameras, and [columnist] Michael Musto from *The Village Voice*". Kelly chuckles at the memory. "It made me realise that maybe the movie was gonna have a second wind."

That wind has never stopped blowing for *Donnie Darko*. In fact, when *Empire* speaks to the 40-year-old, he's outside a digital suite on the Sony lot in LA, about to supervise a super-high-resolution 4K version of the film for a "huge multi-disc box set", out on 12 December. His passion for the project hasn't waned. "You live with your films for the rest of your life," he says. "In a way, they are like a spouse, but you can't get divorced from them 'cause they're like a part of your DNA. They either haunt you or bless you, but they are always with you."

It's fair to say that this troublesome, misunderstood 15-year-old of a film has haunted and blessed Kelly in equal measure.

"NORMAL" AND "FUNCTIONAL" is how Richard Kelly describes his suburban childhood in Newport News, Virginia. So *Donnie Darko* emerged less from any darkness in his own life than his love of Stephen King novels, and the movies of Steven Spielberg and David Lynch.

Soon after graduating from film school in 1997, Kelly resolved to write and direct his first feature script. Inspired by a reminiscence of a kid from his hometown who'd had a chunk of ice plummet into his bedroom from a passing jet plane, he dived into "a teenage superhero journey", which would also tackle "the end of the Reagan era" and weave in his own high-school experiences. "It poured out of me," he says. "The first draft was done in four weeks."

The chunk of ice mutated into a mysterious, falling jet engine, and the kid from his hometown became Donnie Darko, a somnambulant 16-year-old who, on 2 October 1988, is lured from his bed by a six-foot-tall demonic rabbit named Frank. The world is going to end in 28 days, Frank declares, and only Donnie can stop it. While on this quest, he will fall in love, uncover a local self-help guru as a paedophile, discover the mechanisms of time-travel and make an impassioned speech about the sexual practices of the Smurfs.

Date night for Donnie Darko (Jake Gyllenhaal), girlfriend Gretchen Ross (Jena Malone) and his imaginary demonic bunny mate Frank (James Duval).

Below left: Gretchen with local kid David (Scotty Leavenworth).

Below right: Gyllenhaal shoots a scene with producer Drew Barrymore, aka English teacher Karen Pomeroy.





Kelly's producer Sean McKittrick, who worked with him on his graduate film *Visceral Matter* and was at the time interning at New Line Cinema, was deeply impressed. "It was one of the most wildly imaginative stories I've read," he says. "I mean, it was Philip K. Dick again." He was not alone. On the strength of *Donnie Darko*, Kelly was signed up by big Hollywood agency CAA, and just two years after graduation, he and McKittrick found themselves taking meetings all over town.

That's when the first battle for *Donnie Darko* began.

"IT WAS A frustrating year," says Kelly. "I met a lot of very powerful producers and the unanimous feedback was, 'This is a really great writing sample, but it's unproducible. It's too crazy. It's too ambitious. And you're too young.'"

Kelly and McKittrick were told it should be set in the modern day. They were told to make it a straight horror film. Above all, they were told Kelly shouldn't direct it himself. But he refused to let anyone else take it on. "I was just a stubborn little sonuvabitch!" he laughs.

In the end, it took the intervention of an angel to get the film made. Specifically, a Charlie's Angel. In March 2000, Drew Barrymore was in the midst of shooting the \$100 million action caper when her Flower Films producing partner, Nancy Juvonen, shoved Kelly's script into her hand and said, "You have to read this and you have to do it right away." Two days later, McKittrick and Kelly were in downtown LA, on the set of *Charlie's Angels*. "Cameron Diaz was hanging out in front of Drew's trailer," says Kelly. "We walked in, and Drew was reading the script. She was like, 'This is wild. I love this. What do you wanna do?'"

Although the character of disillusioned English teacher Karen Pomeroy had been conceived as a woman in her forties, Kelly asked if Barrymore would like to play her. She did, but only if he let her company produce it. With a laugh, McKittrick recalls saying, "Yeah, please. Please help!" The deal was done in the room.

By August, *Donnie Darko* was finally shooting, with a budget of \$4.5 million. The cast had come together in a flurry. "Once we got Drew, that opened a lot of doors," Kelly says. "She was a magnet for the talent." Katharine Ross took the role of Donnie's therapist; Mary McDonnell played Rose Darko, Donnie's elegantly suffering mother. McDonnell's *Independence Day* co-star James Duval was given the role of Frank, and Jena Malone, who'd played the young Jodie Foster in *Contact*, was cast as Gretchen, Donnie's girlfriend. Most impressively, Patrick Swayze agreed to take the small part of Jim Cunningham, who appears in the film's hilarious self-help infomercials and is later revealed to own a "kiddie-porn dungeon".

"I think he was really nervous to do it," says Kelly, "but he wanted to reinvent himself and do something edgy. I was asking a lot of these actors to take big risks. Not least the lead role, asking someone to play this schizophrenic character >



ON-SET PHOTOGRAPHY: DALE ROBINETTE

Frank, shot at the home of Bill Condon.

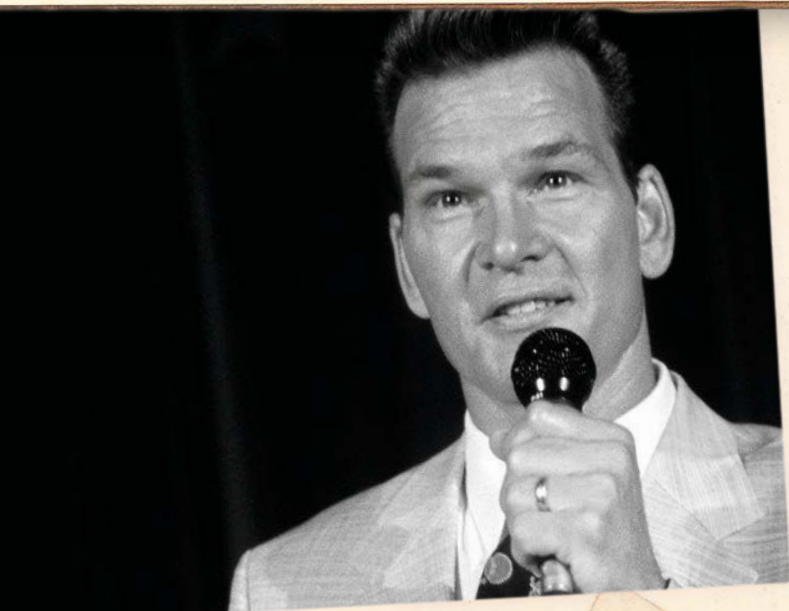
Top right: A 19-year-old Jake Gyllenhaal gets a touch-up between takes on set.

Middle right: The family Darko have a break during filming: Mary McDonnell (mum Rose), Daveigh Chase (younger sister Samantha), Holmes Osborne (dad Eddie), Maggie Gyllenhaal (older sister Elizabeth) and Jake Gyllenhaal (Donnie).

Bottom right: Patrick Swayze takes the mic as self-help guru Jim Cunningham.



ON-SET PHOTOGRAPHY: DALE ROBINETTE



who sees a giant rabbit. But with great risks come great rewards."

Rushmore breakout star Jason Schwartzman had been lined up to play Donnie, but dropped out due to scheduling difficulties. Into the new round of auditions walked Jake Gyllenhaal, 19 years old and fresh from Joe Johnson's family drama *October Sky*. "Jake said maybe two lines," says McKittrick, "and within a minute Richard and I just looked at each other. Like, 'Whoa, this is the guy.'"

Gyllenhaal admits to being surprised by Donnie's creator. "I thought Richard would be some sort of goth-like character," he laughs, "but he was really just a frat boy. Still, the whole journey of this movie is packed with contradictions. The only straightforward thing was that my real sister played my sister." (Jake's sibling Maggie appears as Elizabeth Darko.)

When we speak, Gyllenhaal is driving home after a long day's shoot at Shepperton Studios on Daniel Espinosa's sci-fi thriller *Life*. Despite his exhaustion, he talks about his *Donnie Darko* experience energetically, whether recalling how they had to re-shoot the first day because of a faulty shutter on the Steadicam, or marvelling at how damn fast they had to work. "We block-shot most of the movie," he says, relating how they filmed every Darko dinner-table scene in just a few hours, changing clothes and make-up between takes. "It was *mad*," he says, "but absolutely in the spirit of the movie." Gyllenhaal also fondly remembers Patrick Swayze arriving on set every day "on a motorised scooter", even when Swayze had nothing to shoot. Adds Jena Malone, "He would come in and just hang out, which was just the sweetest thing."

Things weren't quite so relaxed for Kelly. He may have had veteran cinematographer Steven Poster (*Rocky V*) in his corner, but he remembers "people were very nervous that I had bitten off more than I could chew". The film's signature set-piece — a virtuoso, dialogue-free Steadicam glide through the high school to Tears For Fears' *Head Over Heels* — nearly didn't happen at all. "There was a lot of pushback. They were like, 'You don't need this. It's a music video.' Honestly, they were kinda furious with me." Kelly shot it anyway. Despite the anxiety, the intensity of the work and the sheer technical ambition, the shoot wrapped on schedule, and within budget, in 28 days. "I was like, 'Okay... we did it,'" says Kelly.

That's when the second battle for *Donnie Darko* began.

BY HIS OWN admission, Richard Kelly's movies always run long. "I add scenes, I allow improv, I do additional camera set-ups," he sighs. "I just wanna get it in the vault, right?"

Juvonen recalls the *Donnie Darko* editing process as being "painfully painstaking". Kelly's defence is that the movie was "an algebra theorem" that would stop making sense if you took out even one small element. "Then you have financiers who just don't understand the theorem, and they're just like, 'We don't fucking care — just make it 100 minutes long or we're taking it away from you.'"

By the time the Sundance Film Festival came around in January 2001, he had a version just shy of two-and-a-half hours. Juvonen was convinced they were going to be "the belle of the ball". Surely such an ambitious independent film, which even had elaborate and convincing visual effects, would find a distributor? "But that screening did not go as well as we thought."

James Duval remembers an audience member getting up and announcing, "That is the worst movie here at Sundance! It's a horrible movie!" McKittrick thinks the VFX caused people to treat it as a non-independent movie, a cheat that shouldn't have been screened there. "And because it wasn't well-received, we didn't have that many offers to buy it." It looked as if *Donnie Darko* would head straight to home video. "In 2001 that was the death of any movie," shudders the director. "We had to rescue this film from utter, complete destruction."

However, one distributor expressed interest, chiefly because it had experienced success in Britain with another unconventional, seemingly uncommercial film that had received its US premiere at Sundance that year. Namely, *Memento*. "Aaron Ryder, who was [executive] producing *Memento*, convinced his bosses at Newmarket to screen the film and he strategically brought along [*Memento* director] Christopher Nolan," says Kelly. Nolan raved about *Donnie Darko* and, as Kelly puts it, "convinced Newmarket to buy it. He helped rescue the film from oblivion." After further, agonising >

months of trimming it down to 113 minutes to meet Newmarket's requirements, it was set to finally receive its theatrical release, on 26 October 2001.

"Then," says Kelly, "9/11 happened."

IT'S HARD TO gauge the exact degree to which the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 wrecked *Donnie Darko*'s box office chances. Gyllenhaal points out the falling jet-engine element wasn't part of the movie's marketing, though he recognises it was "a very sensitive time". McKittrick says that, as a result of the attacks, "people really weren't going back to theatres at that point". The disappointing performance of *Zoolander*, which was released around the same time, would seem to back this up.

But there could have been other deterrents. With an advertising campaign that focused on the creepy Frank mask, it was easy to mistake it for a horror movie, something which bugs Duval to this day. "Frank the bunny isn't a horror character at all!" he exclaims. "He's just this sort of dark, twisted guardian angel." Malone simply feels the film's defiance of categorisation hurt it most: "It didn't fit into any of the distribution boxes. *Donnie Darko* was not a film of its time."

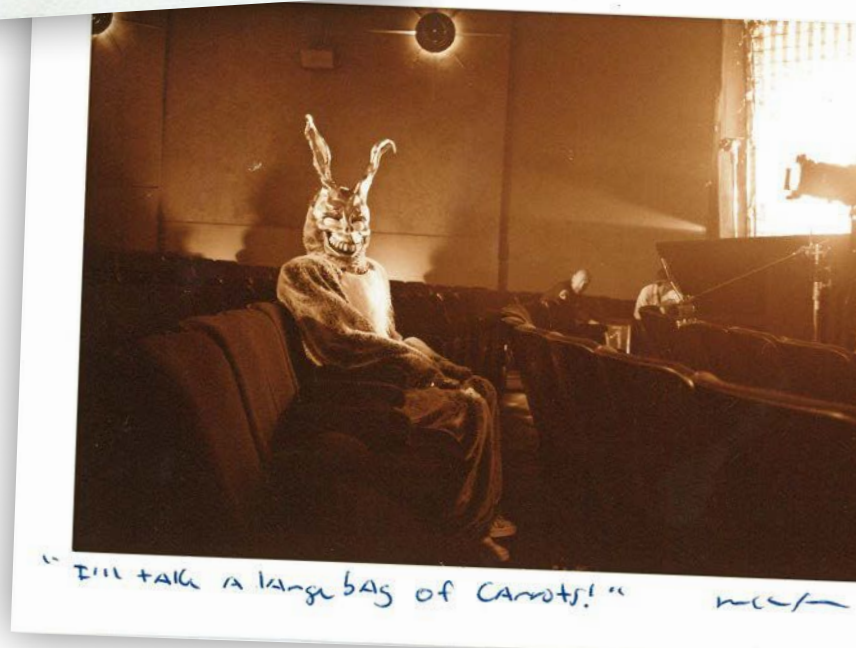
During its opening weekend, *Donnie Darko* took \$110,494. By the end of its theatrical run, it had scraped together just half-a-million dollars.

"It didn't come out with an initial bang," says Gyllenhaal. "But then it had a long, slow burn." This went far beyond the likes of *Two Boots* starting a midnight-movie revival. *Donnie Darko* proved a much bigger success on DVD after its release in March 2002, its proliferation assisted by fansites which obsessed over the details of the paradoxical time-loop structure.

The film also had another weapon: its music. With no budget to hire an established composer, Kelly and his producers invited Michael Andrews, guitarist with The Greyboy Allstars, to write his first score. In so doing, he gave *Donnie Darko* its most enduring element: the downbeat, piano-driven cover version of Tears For Fears' 1983 electropop hit *Mad World*, which plays over the climactic montage of the characters waking on the morning of Donnie's death. "It just stuck like crazy," Andrews tells *Empire*. "And that was it. Movie magic!" Two-and-a-half years later, the song would be the Christmas number one in the UK, and its 'sad cover' influence dominates trailers today, from *The Great Gatsby* (*Back To Black*) to *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* (*No Strings On Me*). "People in the advertising world have told me it's become a verb," laughs Andrews. "To 'Mad World' a song..."

Yet *Donnie Darko*'s impact extends beyond the song. You can draw a line from Kelly's '80s-set, Spielberg/King-inspired suburban sci-fi to this year's *Stranger Things*. And it remains a film which encourages debate. "I designed it with a certain architecture to sustain multiple viewings," the director says. He also believes it's endured because, "There is an emotional undercurrent in it that speaks to anyone who feels like they're different, or as though they are misunderstood."

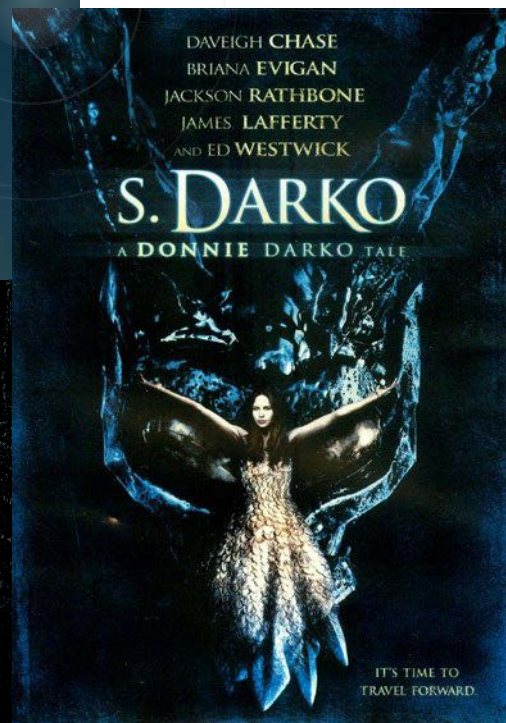
McKittrick puts the film's cult success down to the fact that, "It has such strong iconography. I remember being so excited that Frank the bunny ended up on *The Simpsons*. Barney was sitting at the bar and he looked to his left and there was a version of Frank next to him. It was like, 'Holy shit, we made *The Simpsons*!'"





Kelly with his malevolent lapin creation, plus original *The Philosophy Of Time Travel* prop.

Middle and bottom left: Polaroids taken by Duval on set.



TWISTED SISTER

THE LAMENTABLE TALE OF THE DONNIE DARKO SEQUEL, S. DARKO

THE PLOT

Seven years after her brother's weird death, Donnie's younger sister, Samantha (Daveigh Chase), goes on a road trip with her best pal. After their car breaks down, Samantha starts sleepwalking and appearing in visions to a Gulf War veteran (James Lafferty), who narrowly misses being killed by a meteorite.

THE CREATORS

The 2009 film was directed by Chris Fisher and written by Nathan Atkins, the man behind *Deadly Descent: The Abominable Snowman*. Production company Silver Nitrate owned the rights, having put out *Donnie Darko* on DVD in the US. Richard Kelly had no involvement and says he was told, "You have no legal recourse to stop us."

THE CONNECTIONS

Fisher and Atkins brought back Chase to play the older Samantha, and clearly paid closer attention to Kelly's visual flourishes (a significant red car, a spinning-camera set-piece) than his actual ideas. At best, it can be seen as resembling a tin-eared tribute band.

THE REACTION

S. Darko went straight to DVD and was widely panned: "All style, no substance," said *The San Francisco Examiner*. Kelly flatly refuses to watch it. "It was absolutely repulsive, the way they handled it," he says. "I have nothing but contempt for the people that made that film. I will never see it for the rest of my life. I don't even like talking about it."

FRANK THE BUNNY has, over the past 15 years, ended up in quite a few different places. Juvonen has one of the surviving prop masks nickel-plated and mounted in her front room. Metallica's Kirk Hammett owns another Frank face. And a third can be found, along with the full furry costume, at the home of Bill Condon, director of next year's *Beauty And The Beast* live-action reboot, after his memorabilia-collecting partner Jack Morrissey bought it in an auction. It is with this third Frank that *Empire* will photograph Kelly a few hours after we speak on the Sony lot. We ask if he's looking forward to the reunion. He laughs. "Yeah. I'm gonna go and try and negotiate peace with him more than anything."

Of course, in the battles for *Donnie Darko*, Kelly's fight was never with Frank; the bunny's voice, he jokes, was always the voice in his head. Despite the fact he's only made two movies since (2006's *Southland Tales* and 2009's *The Box*), he doesn't sound embittered by the experience. Fortright and cheerful, during our conversation his mood only truly darkens once, when *Empire* brings up the unsanctioned sequel, *S. Darko* (see panel). Otherwise, he sees his setbacks as mere obstacles on a long journey. "This is a difficult business, but I've always tried to engineer my stories for the long haul. The true measure of any work of art is how it stands the test of time."

Morrissey and Condon's Frank, says Kelly, will soon be donated to the new Academy Museum in Los Angeles, and will be on display there once the building opens in spring 2018. He's come a long way since his first iteration, a Kelly pencil sketch drawn as he worked on the script. "A lot of people saw that sketch and were confused. They were like, 'Why is it so disturbing-looking?' So I'm really honoured he continues to transfix people." *Donnie Darko*: not so misunderstood after all. ●

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**WE SALUTE THE HEROES
AND HIGH-POINTS OF 2016**



Ryan Reynolds's X-rated comic (anti)hero Deadpool.

DEADPOOL

THE

DEADPOOL, VIA HIS GOOD FRIEND RYAN REYNOLDS, FIELDS QUESTIONS ON HIS INCREDIBLE YEAR

PORTRAIT ART STRIEBER

How did you celebrate your film's success of your movie?

I had the cast of *Sesame Street* fired.

What's the most extravagant thing you've bought with all that cash?

It's a Fox film. I was paid in cocaine.

Who's your unluckiest celebrity fan?

Deathstroke.

What was your favourite movie of 2016? (Not your own.)

Hunt For The Wilderpeople. (Serious answer.)

Which film of 2016

would have been improved by you being in it?

The Amanda Knox documentary.

What's the strangest fan encounter you've had this year?

I got my wife pregnant.

You filmed a video intro for our *Deadpool* issue. How was that?

Inexplicable hell. Don't ever ask me to do that again or I'll buy your shitty little magazine company and burn it to shapeless ash. Then I'll go home to your wives, husbands and lovers to pick up the pieces of their broken little hearts and love them through this tragedy. Sure, it'll take time, but many minutes later they'll have forgotten all about you as I sing Taylor Swift's *You Belong With Me* in perfect symphony to my acrobatic yet alarmingly emotional love-making.

What can we expect from the sequel?

T.J. Miller snorting live mice off a mirror in the bathroom at the Minneapolis airport. Followed by a festival of handjob. (Serious answer.)

Are you going to upgrade your suit?

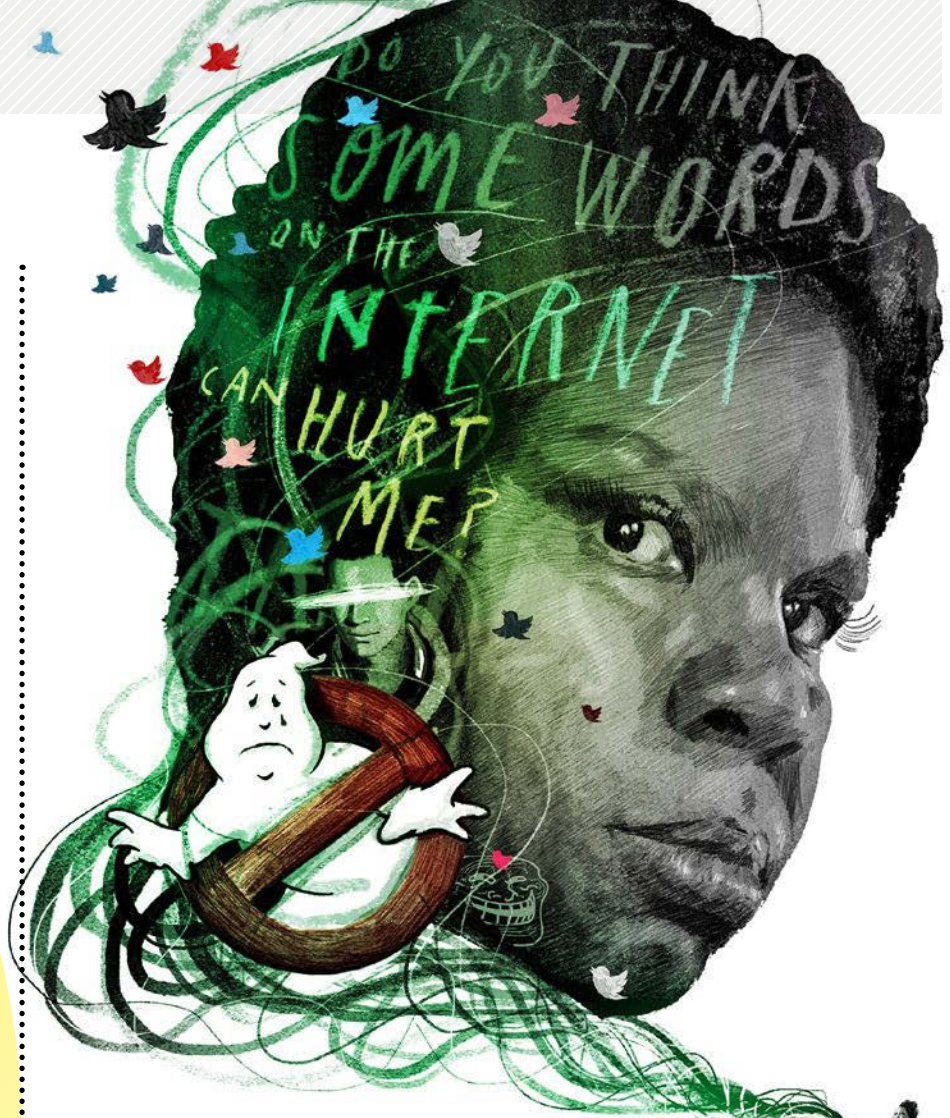
We're adding tasteful underwear, but the point is, I'm sorry for that thing I said about burning stuff and your families. I don't know where rage like that comes from.

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

Who's asking? Doug? Did Doug contact you?

Thank you.

Fuck you.



THE STORY

LESLIE JONES AIN'T AFRAID OF NO TROLLS

ILLUSTRATION PETER STRAIN



THIS SUMMER SHOULD have been glorious for Leslie Jones. After a decade of popping up in films as characters such as 'Trucker Woman' (*National Security*) and 'Angry Subway Patron' (*Trainwreck*), the 49-year-old *Saturday Night Live* cast member finally got her big break, as one of the lead quartet in Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters* reboot. She headed to Boston and spent a major chunk of 2015 battling phantoms. But online, trouble was brewing. Countless male 'fans', furious at the casting of female leads, targeted a torrent of abuse at everyone involved. Jones received the worst of it, with many horrific, often racist messages aimed at her Twitter account. When *Empire* caught up with her just before the movie's release, she was thoroughly bummed out. "It makes me very sad," she said. "If someone was to tell me, 'Hey, Leslie, we did research and found out that all those people sending insults to you were 11 years old,' I'd be like, 'Okay, that makes sense.' But these are actual grown people that use their energy to take a computer out and spew hate."

Once removed from their audiences, many stars now interact freely with fans. But as 2016

progressed, Jones became a cautionary tale for this type of digital intimacy: not only did the assaults on her continue after the film's release, but in late August the comedian's iCloud account was hacked and nude photos released online, as well as images of her passport and driving licence.

At times, Jones seemed crushed. "I leave Twitter tonight with tears and a very sad heart," she posted at one point. Happily, in the long run she proved unstoppable. Receiving supportive messages from the likes of Katy Perry, John Boyega and even Hillary Clinton, she not only kept going as @Lesdoggg, but live-tweeted the Olympics to such acclaim that NBC flew her to Rio. Finally, on 22 October, she returned to *SNL*'s Weekend Update desk with a defiant message: "Do you think some words on the internet can hurt me? I once had a crazy bitch try to beat me with a shovel at a bus stop because I took her spot on the bench. Now *that's* a troll!" Online harassment of celebrities will continue, but Jones has proved a laudable example of how to deal with it, a hero both with a proton pack and without.





THE CAMEO

SIGOURNEY WEAVER IN *FINDING DORY*

THE BIG SHORT had Margot Robbie explaining financial jargon in a bath. *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* dared us to forget Judd Apatow's penis. And Justin Bieber was, somehow, the best thing about *Zoolander No. 2*. Yet it's Sigourney Weaver who wears this year's cameo crown. Partly for her fun turn as Kate McKinnon's daffy mentor in *Ghostbusters* ("I wanted to play her with a German accent — Paul Feig said no!"), but mainly for her surprise appearance in *Finding Dory*.

Or rather, non-appearance. For Weaver plays herself as a voice booming over the speakers to welcome visitors to the aquarium where most of the film takes place. Her opening gambit — "I'm Sigourney Weaver" — gets the film's biggest laugh. "I'd worked with [director] Andrew Stanton on *WALL•E*," says Weaver, who voiced the ship's computer in that film. "He called and said, 'I have something for you on *Dory*.' I was flattered as I've done a lot of work about the oceans and conservation. When the fish say, 'My friend Sigourney,' I was thrilled."

Recording the session took around two hours, and clearly gave Weaver the taste for it: she'll also play herself in Noah Baumbach's *Yeh Din Ka Kissa*. Could Weaver lift next year's Best Cameo title too, then? Judd Apatow's penis has its work cut out.

THE PRODIGY

MILLIE BOBBY BROWN *STRANGER THINGS*

WORDS JOHN NUGENT PORTRAIT STEVE NEAVES

MOST ACTORS TREAD the boards for the first time in a school play. For Millie Bobby Brown, it was at the 2016 Emmy Awards, performing *Uptown Funk* with her *Stranger Things* co-stars to an audience of 7,000, plus 11.3 million more at home. As stage debuts go, it's pretty extreme. But Brown shrugs it off. "I'd done a Comic-Con before," she says. "I've never been shy of big crowds."

Big crowds are starting to become standard for the 12-year-old best known as Eleven, the smash Netflix show's psychokinetic, Eggo waffle-loving heroine. There have been talk shows. There have been magazine covers. There's been an audience at the White House. And there's been the whirlwind of *that* Emmys show, during which John Travolta, Melissa McCarthy and David Schwimmer all declared themselves fans. "I was shouting, 'Pivot!' at David Schwimmer like the *Friends* episode!" grins Brown. An episode, it's terrifying to note, that first aired five years before she was born.

The insanity hasn't stopped there. Since the sci-fi series launched in July, Eleven has also inspired tattoos, Hallowe'en costumes, a Kate McKinnon impression on *Saturday Night Live* and all-around fan hysteria. "I was at Comic-Con," recounts Brown, "when this group of girls came up to me and just started crying! I was like, 'Why are you crying over me? I'm just Millie!'"

Fortunately, she has plenty of support to help her from being sucked into the Upside Down of sudden fame. Her family manage her social-media accounts (1.6 million and counting on Instagram), *Stranger Things* creators the Duffer Brothers are "like big brothers", and Matthew Modine, who plays the shadowy scientist Eleven calls "Papa", is "genuinely like my second dad". The latter bonded with Brown as she had her head shaved for the role — Modine, of course, went under the razor for *Full Metal Jacket*.

The question, then, is what next? Eleven's return in Season 2 has been confirmed, but how did she escape apparent evaporation? And will she have a fresh stock of Eggos? Brown handles our questions with the guarded ambiguity of a seasoned pro. "I could tell you. But then I'd have to kill you." Presumably with her mind.

THE QUOTES

THE MOST MEMORABLE UTTERANCES FROM THE MOUTHS OF STARS TO THE EARS OF EMPIRE

"He calls it 'fuck-dust'. He liberally sprinkled fuck-dust on the film."

CHARLIE HUNNAM ON GUY RITCHIE'S PROCESS

"I imagined a child drawing a mouse's head. I'm talking triangular member and balls to either side in place of the mouse's ears."

THE GREASY STRANGLER DIRECTOR JIM HOSKING'S PENIS-DESIGN SECRETS

"One or two people smile at me now when I go through an airport, rather than muttering, 'Wanker,' as I pass, which is a change."

SAM NEILL IS FEELING THE HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE EFFECT

"That night I ate some mushrooms and I did self-inflict some burns."

JAI COURTNEY REVEALS HIS *SUICIDE SQUAD* PREP

"Superman can go fuck himself."

JENNIFER LAWRENCE, NOT A FAN OF KAL-EL

THE

GANGSTA

JULIAN DENNISON

HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE

WORDS HELEN O'HARA PORTRAIT CHARLIE GRAY

"IT DOES GET weird," says Julian Dennison of the fame he's experienced since Taika Waititi's *Hunt For The Wilderpeople* became New Zealand's biggest-ever homegrown hit. "Like, if you're rushing to the loo and someone asks for a photo, I'm like, 'You won't get a very nice photo!' I think it raised \$12 million in New Zealand and our population is only four million, so everyone saw it three times. It's sort of like *Pokémon Go*."

The 14-year-old's "bad egg" Ricky Baker is a comedy creation for the ages, dispensing great lines as he wanders the wilds with grumpy foster carer Uncle Hec (Sam Neill). "We didn't learn much about the outdoors because we had catering, we had warm clothes, we pretty much had the army," Dennison says. "I learned something from the sound guy about the edible ends of vines, but I forgot 10 minutes later. Bush skills coming out of this film: zero to none."

But Dennison, who has one more year of acting before a planned three-year sabbatical to focus on finishing school, says his co-star gave him acting advice that stuck a little better — though he hasn't yet received the ultimate accolade of having one of Neill's farm animals named after him. "If he gets, like, a dinosaur, or a bald eagle, he should name it Julian. And he has his own winery! Maybe on my 21st birthday he can shout the whole party."

Dennison's mum casts doubt on that notion ("Consider the size of your family, honey"), highlighting the fundamental difference between Ricky and Julian: the latter is no kind of juvenile delinquent. "There are scenes in the film where I say some bad language and give the finger, and I didn't want to do it," he admits. "Every time I'd look at Mum and be like, 'Sorry!'"

At least he's gangsta enough to explain Ricky's favourite slang word to the uninitiated. "It's s-k-u-x, and if you want to get really into it, two Xs. It sort of means you're cool, spunky, awesome. It's the compliment of compliments."

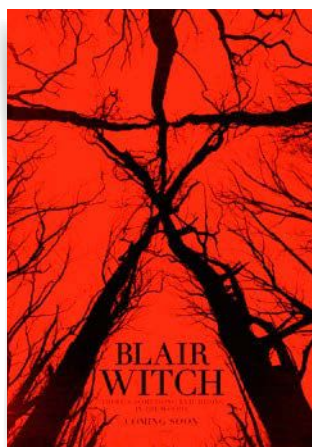
Julian Dennison, then: a pretty skuxx guy. Let's hope 2017 treats him as well.



Julian Dennison,
photographed
exclusively for
Empire in Fitzrovia,
London, on 16
September 2016.

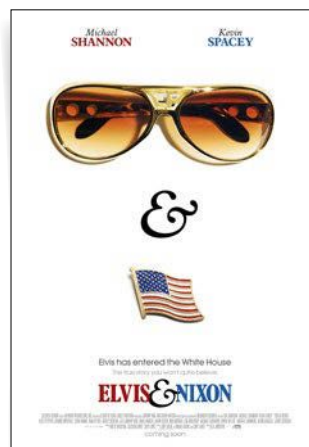
THE POSTERS

CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN, PRESIDENT
OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ART,
CRITIQUES SOME OF 2016'S MOST
NOTABLE ONE-SHEETS



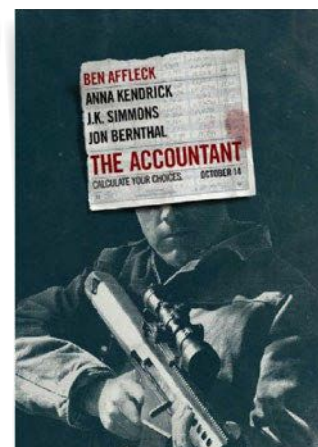
BLAIR WITCH

"This reminded me of [Turner Prize-winning contemporary artists] Gilbert and George — probably that strong colour, the red and black. It's a very powerful composition. The symbolism works well. It's unsettling. I felt that was a really good one. And actually using the conventions of 20th- and 21st-century art."



ELVIS & NIXON

"This is really sophisticated. It's witty. It's ironic. The use of the flag like a little mouth. The fact that the folded glasses make eyes within the lenses. It's obviously referencing surrealism. Things like Salvador Dalí. And it's not trying too hard. It's just saying, 'Look, this is interesting enough already, Elvis and Nixon!'"



THE ACCOUNTANT

"This is really intriguing because it looks like a very politicised artist called John Heartfield, who was working in Germany in the '20s. His work was mostly in black and white and he was effectively the inventor of the collaged image. I like the graininess, and the hint of blood in the thumbprint. Striking."



SUICIDE SQUAD

"It's like they've deliberately made a bad poster. Sweets, but with death heads: the irony is heavy. Not subtle. The cultural references are interesting, because it's picking up on things like [graffiti artist and neo-expressionist painter] Jean-Michel Basquiat. If you like bad taste, this is probably for you."



ROGUE ONE

"This is disappointing. The image in the sky reminded me of the great Paul Nash painting about the Battle Of Britain: it's all the tracks of the fighter planes in the sky, making the shape of giant flowers. I wonder whether that might be something that triggered this. Other than that, I think it is deeply bland."



NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

"There's this very successful artist at the moment, Mark Bradford, whose work is made from torn posters. So it's not beyond imagining that they've picked up on his work. It's interesting. They've used the classic trope of a human face so the eye engages you visually. Good composition, in painting terms."

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHARLIE GRAY
STYLIST: MICHAEL ANTHONY BRADLEY @ MANDY COAKLEY REPRESENTS
GROOMING: SARA CLARKE USING DERMALOGICA AND BUMBLE+BUMBLE

Getting to know you: Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) meets Tom Holland's Peter Parker, aka Spider-Man.

THE SCENE WHEN PETER MET TONY CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

THE FIRST MEETING of Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark and Tom Holland as the brand-new Peter Parker, which comes just over an hour into *Captain America: Civil War*, is a thing of joy: a quickfire back-and-forth as Stark, who has shown up at Peter's New York apartment unannounced, cajoles and teases the reluctant Parker into joining his superteam. It's funny, poignant and wonderfully written and performed — all without a mention of Peter's Uncle Ben or a “with great power comes great responsibility” in sight. “Our mandate wasn't to mention those things,” says co-writer Christopher Markus. “Our mandate was to write a good scene. The fumbling over topics and Peter trying to evade being discovered gave it its own energy.”

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM – DAY
Tony looks around the room.

TONY: Whoa, what have we here? Retro tech? Thrift store? Salvation Army?

PETER: The garbage, actually.

TONY: You're a dumpster-diver?

PETER: Yeah, I was... Anyway, look, I definitely did not apply for your grant...

TONY: Nuh-uh. Me first.

PETER: Okay.

TONY: Quick question of the rhetorical variety. *[He beams footage of Spider-Man in action from his phone]* That's you, right?

PETER: No. What do you mean?

TONY: Yeah. *[Playing more footage]* Look at you go. Wow! Nice catch. Three thousand pounds, 40 miles an hour. That's not easy. You got mad skills.

PETER: That's all on YouTube, though, right? That's where you found that? Because you know that's all fake. It's all done on the computer. It's like that video... What is it?



TONY: Yeah. You mean, like those UFOs over Phoenix?

PETER: Exactly.

Tony uses a broom to open an attic door. A Spider-Man suit falls down. Peter sighs.

TONY: What have we here? So... you're the Spider-ling. Crime-Fighting Spider. You're Spider-Boy?

PETER: Spider-Man.

TONY: Not in that onesie, you're not.



THE MEME DAVID S. PUMPKINS

THE WORLD HAD plenty of reasons to be thankful for Tom Hanks this year. If he wasn't landing a plane on the Hudson in *Sully*, he was saving the whole shebang in *Inferno*. But his crowning glory came in a form nobody could have predicted: a seemingly throwaway *Saturday Night Live* sketch involving a haunted elevator, dancing skeletons, an electro earworm and a gurning enigma named David S. Pumpkins (catchphrase: “Any queeeestions?”). It aired on 22 October — by the next day, Pumpkins was everywhere, with tribute videos, Halloween costumes and the surest sign you've made it: parody Twitter accounts. Hanks has been tight-lipped about it, saying only, “I'm going to be David S. Pumpkins for the rest of my life,” but with any luck there's a movie in the works. After all, we have many queeeestions.

HOW MANY DID YOU NOTCH UP?

Seen it: ☒

THE FILMS

THE MOVIES THAT MOVED US, THRILLED US AND MADE US WANT TO GO ON THE RUN IN THE NEW ZEALAND WILDERNESS



Seen it: ☐

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

A woman wakes up in a locked fallout shelter, with a man who might be her saviour or her abductor – is the world really ending out there or not?

Defining moment: John Goodman dancing to the jukebox.



Seen it: ☐

ARRIVAL

Amy Adams's linguist has a close encounter of the third kind in Denis Villeneuve's alien invasion flick with brains. *Blade Runner 2* is in safe hands.

Defining moment: Amy makes a phone call and changes the world.



Seen it: ☐

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

Should the government regulate superheroes? Cap says no, Stark says yes. They disagree forcefully.

Defining moment: Paul Rudd's Ant-Man steals the movie with a small – and a big – role to play.



Seen it: ☐

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

An uplifting tale of an extraordinary family led by a widower who home schools his children with a very different curriculum.

Defining moment: Viggo and his family arrive at his wife's funeral.



Seen it: ☐

DEADPOOL

Ryan Reynolds gets hit with the ugly stick then seeks redemption via ultra-violence and meta wisecracks.

Defining moment: Mr Pool sawing his own hand off on the overpass – gruesome and hilarious.



Seen it: ☐

DOCTOR STRANGE

Hippie, trippy origin story for Marvel's psychedelic sorcerer is like Cumberbatch in the sky with diamonds.

Defining moment: When the Ancient One blasts Strange into alternate dimensions with hands-on-hands...



Seen it: ☐

DON'T BREATHE

Three young robbers break into the house of a blind war veteran. But he's not trapped in there with them – they're trapped in there with him.

Defining moment: As if turkey basters weren't disturbing enough already...



Seen it: ☐

EMBRACE

Taryn Brumfitt examines how the media creates self-image issues for women in a doco that should be on every school's viewing curriculum.

Defining moment: An eyebrow-raising visit to an LA plastic surgeon.



Seen it: ☐

EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!!

Richard Linklater's pseudo spiritual sequel to his own *Dazed And Confused* delivers the sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll as only US frat pack comedies can.

Defining moment: The gang get loaded and talk Pink Floyd.



Seen it: ☐

GREEN ROOM

A punk band plays a gig for a room of Neo-Nazis and witnesses a murder backstage. There is no encore.

Defining moment: Anton Yelchin puts arm through an open door and meets a Nazi brandishing something sharp.



Seen it: ☐

HACKSAW RIDGE

Mel Gibson's brutal retelling of the true story of Desmond Doss, the only conscientious objector to be given the Congressional Medal Of Honour.

Defining moment: The US troops try to take the ridge. Bullets fly.



Seen it: ☐

THE HATEFUL EIGHT

Quentin Tarantino remakes *The Thing*, but in 1870s Wyoming instead of 1980s Antarctica, and with Channing Tatum instead of a deformed space creature.

Defining moment: Samuel L Jackson on how he captured the General's son.



Seen it: ☐

HIGH-RISE

Ben Wheatley's savage adaptation of J.G. Ballard's dissection of the British class system. In a high-rise block. With Tom Hiddleston. And a horse.

Defining moment: Upper and lower classes try to out-party each other.



Seen it: ☐

HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE

Mouthy foster child and prickly mountain man flee police in rural NZ. Much, much funnier than it sounds.

Defining moment: The double-entendre-laden showdown with the hunters in the lodge.



Seen it: ☐

THE JUNGLE BOOK

Your typical "boy meets wolfpack, boy loses wolfpack, boy gets wolfpack back with help from a bear" story, with added Bill Murray.

Defining moment: Christopher Walken as a huge singing ape.



Seen it: ☐

LA LA LAND

Single-handedly delivers CPR to the classic musical, and will warm your heart like a vest made of puppies.

Defining moment: The spectacular six-minute opening number set on an LA freeway. Audacious and brilliant.



Seen it: ☐

LOVE & FRIENDSHIP

Jane Austen novella *Lady Susan* gets turned into a caustic 18th century rom-com with a revelatory Kate Beckinsale leading the charge.

Defining moment: Any time the monumentally dim Sir James speaks.



Seen it: ☐

THE NICE GUYS

A thug and a washed-up private eye wander into a conspiracy and trade snappy Shane Black repartee as a variety of shit hits a selection of fans.

Defining moment: Rusty and Ryan discover the worst way to hide a body.



Seen it: ☐

NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

An emotionally cold Amy Adams goes up against an emotionally fiery Jake Gyllenhaal in Tom Ford's artfully composed second feature.

Defining moment: The arrival of Michael Shannon's Texas lawman.

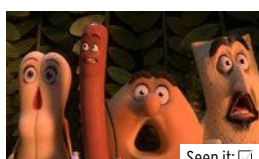


Seen it: ☐

THE REVENANT

Leo grimaces his way to an Oscar as frontiersman Hugh Glass, left for dead and out for vengeance on a mumbly Tom Hardy.

Defining moment: Leo versus the bear. Call it a hard-fought draw.



Seen it: ☐

SAUSAGE PARTY

Imagine a world where food walks, talks, smokes pot, has sex and swears like a trooper. Welcome to Seth Rogen's *Sausage Party*. Cough.

Defining moment: The jaw-dropping orgiastic finale. Nice buns!



Seen it: ☐

SPOTLIGHT

Perfectly judged ensemble piece on the *Boston Globe*'s expose of child sexual abuse in the Catholic church.

Defining moment: The moment the team realise they have all the evidence that they need to stick it to the church.



Seen it: ☐

STEVE JOBS

How one man went from being a narcissistic arsehole to a world-famous narcissistic arsehole... but changed the planet doing it.

Defining moment: Jobs versus Wozniak in front of an auditorium.

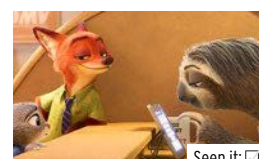


Seen it: ☐

THE WITCH

A puritanical family in 17th century New England realise that if they go down to the woods, they're in for a big surprise (not really: see film title).

Defining moment: Goat Black Phillip reveals his sinister true form...



Seen it: ☐

ZOOTOPIA

48 Hrs with a rabbit and fox for Nolte and Murphy, and a perfectly realised animal metropolis for San Fran. Funny, moving, with endless clever sight gags.

Defining moment: The chase through the differently scaled sections of town.

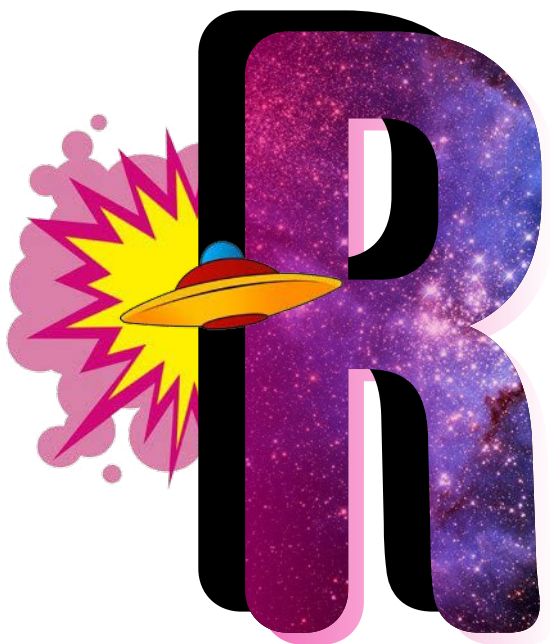


SPACE ODDITY

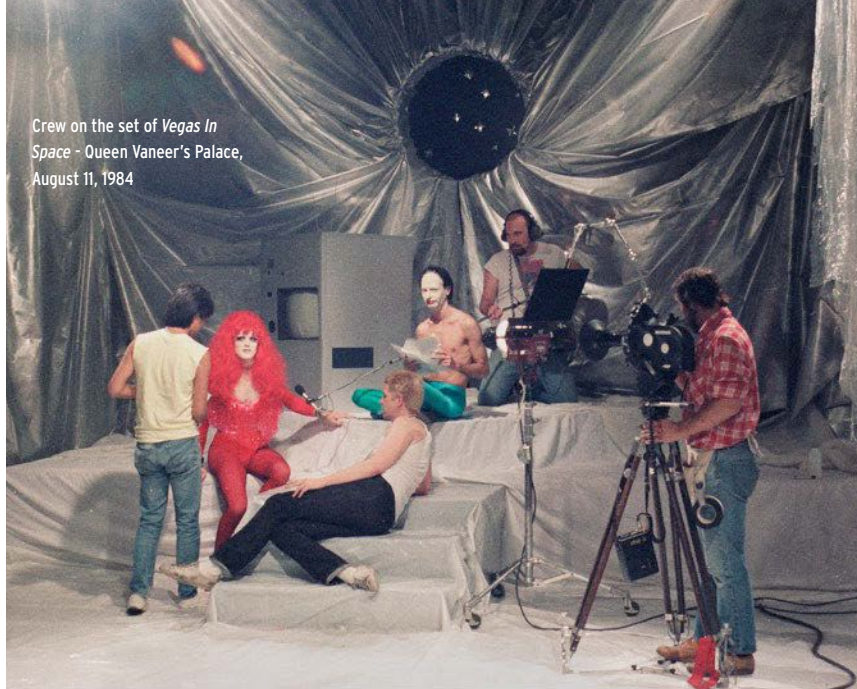
THE TUMULTUOUS MAKING OF **VEGAS IN SPACE**:-
THE CULT LO-FI SPACE FANTASY FILM AND THE
FIRST ALL-DRAG QUEEN MOVIE EVER MADE

WORDS TERRI WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY DAN NICOLETTA
ILLUSTRATIONS BILL MCCONKEY





Crew on the set of *Vegas In Space* - Queen Vaneer's Palace, August 11, 1984



RATHER FITTINGLY, IT started and ended with fur. The beginning: Doris Fish, famous (and infamous) San Franciscan drag queen and lead member of drag troupe Sluts-A-Go-Go, returned from a trip to New York in 1983 and exclaimed to friend and young filmmaker Phillip R Ford in her thickest Australian accent, "I've spent a thousand dollars on fun fur, so we *have* to make a *Barbarella*-type movie!" Nearly nine years later, the end: Ford was at Sundance Film Festival with *Vegas In Space*, the film they ended up making, but without Doris Fish by his side. It was snowing and, clad in a fur coat, he made his way up the hill to a glitzy evening event. "Pardon me," a gentleman queried. "Do you know the way to the queer party?" Turning on his heel, Ford was faced with acclaimed British punk director Derek Jarman, whose seminal queer movie *Edward II* was in competition. The year was 1991 and New Queer Cinema was exploding out of the festival. Directing Jarman up that white-dusted hill in Utah marked the apex of a long and remarkable journey for Phillip R Ford, Doris Fish and *Vegas In Space*. One that would take in debt, drugs, drag, debauchery and death over the course of almost a decade.

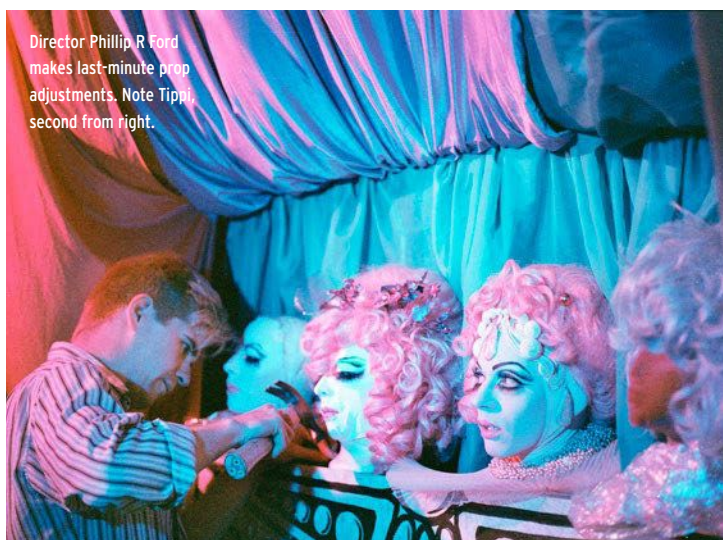
AFTER DORIS FISH'S fur-inspired proclamation, the initial plan was to remake *Valley Of The Dolls*, but then Fish and Miss X — a fellow member of Sluts-A-Go-Go — wrote an original 25-page script by hand and presented it to Ford over a breakfast of buckwheat pancakes. It wasn't finished, most crucially lacking an end, but they had a rock-solid concept and had even gone so far as to assign the lead roles to themselves and other drag queens they knew, including Timmy Spence and Ginger Quest. The story was this: a group of astronauts are sent undercover as showgirls to the planet Clitoris: a world without men which has experienced a spate of thefts of the gems "girlinium". To pass unnoticed on the pleasure planet and undertake their mission — to save the universe — they must change sex by swallowing gender reversal pills.

Timmy Spence — who played Lt Dick Hunter — remembers being thrilled by the idea immediately ("Well, I did love that movie *Queen Of Outer Space* from 1958 starring Zsa Zsa Gabor!"), and Phillip R Ford concurred. "I loved it," he tells *Empire* of his reaction to the script that morning. "The whole social and metaphysical concepts — or, in terms of the planet, the physical concepts — were thought out. We'll have a pink sky and everyone will be a queen or a princess or royalty. Working classes will be in black and white; they won't have earned their right to be in colour."

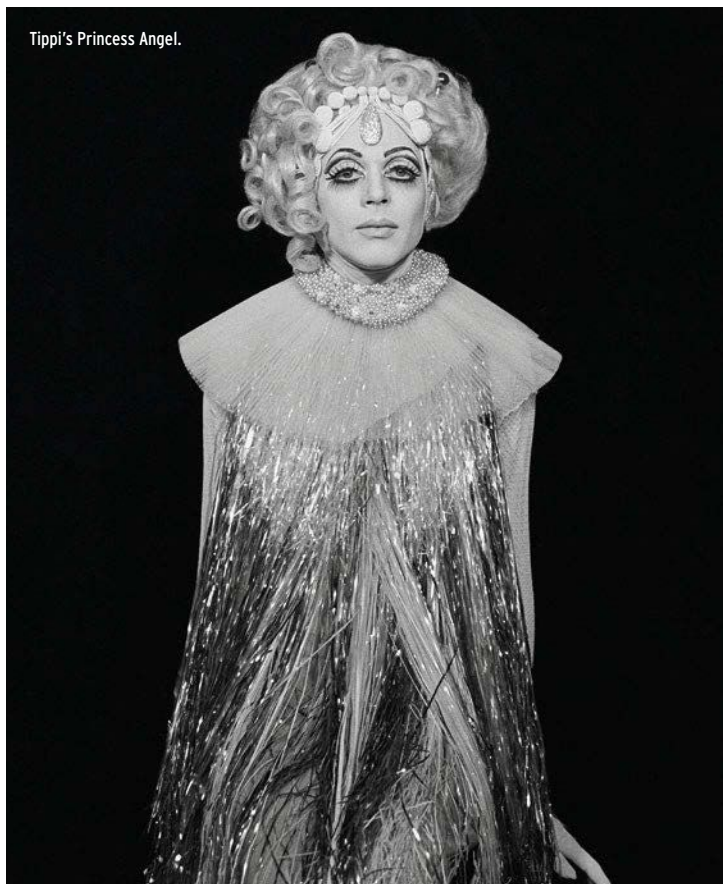
Ford had form for bizarre films. Having "flipped out" at an early age over Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Tod Browning and James Whale, he made a film while still in high school which he now describes as, "Kids wantonly doing drugs and misbehaving [*who*] go in the hot tub and take off their clothes, before the little sister turns the water up and boils them all."

While studying film at San Francisco State University, Ford met two like-minded students: Robin Clark, who would become director of photography on *Vegas In Space*, and, perhaps most crucially, Lori Naslund, wife of Doris Fish (legal name: Philip Mills). It was Naslund's bartender girlfriend who had first passed the message to Ford over gin gimlets: >

Director Phillip R Ford makes last-minute prop adjustments. Note Tippi, second from right.



Tippi's Princess Angel.



Costume change for
Ms. Veneer



Doris Fish wanted to make a movie with him. Immediately sold on the pages in his hand, Ford took \$5,000 from Fish — and those piles of fun fur in magenta, lime green, yellow and hot pink — to kick-start production, and filming began in March of 1983.

With such a relatively small amount of money, filming took place almost exclusively in the apartments of Ford and Fish, who also built almost everything herself. “She was very handy for a queen,” remembers Timmy Spence. “She could make sets and do all of that stuff.” The three main sets — the opulent throne room, the spaceship and the Empress’ lair — were all created in Fish’s small living room.

“It was all magenta fur,” remembers Ford of the throne-room build. “We didn’t have enough fur to cover both sides of the room, so we put the fur up and built the set on one side of the room and shot everything, then took the fur down, stapled it on the other side and shot everything there.”

The special effects were toy rockets hung on string, flying over a city made from perfume bottles and lipsticks. This DIY approach was born out of necessity, with a crew numbering just three, in addition to Ford: a cameraman, a sound recordist and Robin Clark, who came armed with just a crate full of gels and some rudimentary lights.

Hair, make-up and wardrobe was also the domain of Fish (who was playing the lead role of Cpt Dan Tracey/Cpt Tracey Daniels). She visualised, designed and made everyone’s costumes, designed the hair and make-up and personally painted the faces of the other leads. Though the production fell into something of a rhythm, it is perhaps unsurprising that, against this background, it was beset by pauses and delays lasting from weeks to months at a time.

“Time lost all meaning!” laughs Ford now. “Doris would build the sets and then go off and start putting people into drag. I had a shot list and would use stand-ins and Robin would light it. It could be a *day* later when people actually came in and, of course, when you’re dealing with drag queens you do their face and their beards start to grow out! They don’t stay pristine...”

Two or three scenes would be shot this way in five-to-10-day bursts — the cast and crew often sustained by drugs — until, usually, the money ran out. A few months would pass and they’d go again once they’d refilled the coffers (occasionally through Fish selling sex). When they picked up production, it could be with the addition of whole new scenes dreamed up in the meantime. Ford recalls the key dream sequence being added because Doris had thought of the joke, “Calm down, it was just a bad dream sequence!” in one of the filming breaks.

In the meantime, Timmy Spence had to leave the production. “I was in a band and we were beginning to tour,” he says. “I just didn’t have time, so that’s why I ‘died’ while taking my sex-change pills.”

Though it became known in San Francisco as the film that might never get finished, the final scene was in the can by August of 1984. What isn’t disputed, though, is that the film wasn’t completely finished for eight more years.

In this period, Fish became a greeting-card model — appearing on local talk shows and embarking on nationwide tours — and she and Ford spent a year doing a “legitimate” production of the Maxwell Anderson play *The Bad Seed*. The fire would be stoked by occasional screening parties hosted by the pair, bits of film projected against sheets hung on the apartment walls as the stars oohed and aahed, “thrilled to see their faces so brightly lit,” says Ford.

But in the back of his mind was the constant nagging thought that bloomed into a source of pronounced stress: they *had* to get back to the movie. “I had low level anxiety and depression, thinking, ‘Will this ever get done? *How* will it ever get done?’”

And something far more devastating was also hurtling towards them, previously unseen. “AIDS started,” says Ford. “Everyone started to get sick and [was] dying.” The disease hit those closest to the film, with Fish and Tippi both developing full-blown AIDS.

A major unfinished element of the film was the sound, which had been worked on initially by Bob Davis, Tippi’s partner. Unable to carry on working on the film as her illness progressed, Davis’s work was picked up by his business partner Joshua Raoul Brody, a friend of Ford and Sluts-A-Go-



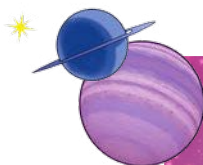
Top: Empress Noodles Nebula (Arturo Glaster) in her starcruiser.

Left: Queen Veneer on location in San Francisco.

Below: The colourful world of Planet Clitoris.

Bottom: Tommy Pace and Sandahl Hebert in *Vegas In Space*, 1984





Go. "Kinda rushed," is how Brody recalls the experience 25 years later. "And overcast with Bob's sadness. He was still 'in the room' and offered advice and ideas when he could, but he wasn't really there."

The film, however, *was* eventually completed. In January 1991, aided by a \$30,000 donation from an independently wealthy friend, Ford was able to pick up production and charge full steam ahead towards the date that had been set for the film to premiere in San Francisco: 11 October. But not everyone would make it to the autumn.

Doris Fish died in late June while the film was being mixed; Tippi six weeks later when they were designing posters. Both saw a work-in-progress screening but neither saw the finished film.

"It seemed like a cheat, like a joke of life," shares Ford, after a pause. "It seemed so unfair and unreal. People were dying all the time. Half the people I knew died. You didn't know if *you* were going to die."

Vegas In Space played for 10 weeks in San Francisco as a midnight movie while Ford tried to line up a distributor for a national rollout. Then Sundance came a-knocking. Or rather, a friend of Ford's on the committee pulled some strings and Ford ended up on that snowy hill with Derek Jarman.

THE FILM WASN'T

out of the woods yet. Given 1991 was being hailed as the year of New Queer Cinema — *Edward II*, *Swoon* and *Young Soul Rebels* all played that year — the timing might have looked fortuitous. But many gay filmmakers at the time sought to move their filmmaking into the mainstream, achieve legitimacy and avoid tropes at all costs. *Vegas In Space*, as an unashamed celebration of camp, fell very firmly outside this movement.

"It didn't fit in," states Ford firmly. "It seemed beneath this crowd. It was a very different movie; it was clearly an exploitation picture. It was vulgar, it was stupid, it was very cheap. It didn't aspire to the refined sensibilities."

This resistance didn't just extend to the industry, either. The reception from audiences also wasn't what Ford had hoped for. "We were trying to make a stupid movie," he admits. "I wouldn't say we were trying to make a *bad* movie, but we knew what we were making. When it opened, I thought it would be more of an art film, but it became underground immediately."

Ford met with several distributors in the following months but none were interested, or interested enough to offer up an appropriate advance. That was, apart from Troma, an independent film distributor that specialised in low-budget movies and *was* prepared to stump up cash. *Vegas In Space* went on to play theatrically for a week in New York, then in San Diego, and was licensed to Japan. There was also a deal with the USA Network to play as part of the *Up All Night* cable series that aired weekly on Friday and Saturday nights. It may not have been what Ford or Fish had envisioned, but it was powerful in a way that they could only have dreamed of.

Joshua Raoul Brody vividly remembers being approached by a student after guest-lecturing at a film class: "As I was getting ready to leave, a young student came up to me, his eyes wide and maybe even a little watery, and confessed that seeing *Vegas In Space* on cable TV in his little Midwestern town changed his life. It reassured him that he was not alone, and gave him the courage to come out and move to San Francisco."

Unsurprisingly then, in this context, *Vegas In Space* has developed something of a cult following in the 25 years since its release, recently playing a sold-out anniversary event in San Francisco attended by Miss X, Timmy Spence and Phillip R Ford. "It was a ton of fun," remembers Timmy Spence. "I actually like the film a lot better now!"

Ford's relationship with his movie is admittedly a little more complicated, almost three decades after it began. He admits that he doesn't watch it often these days. "I'm not ashamed of it," he insists. "I'm proud of it, it's very singular — there is nothing else like it. But that seems like a different person. I was 20 when I started doing it; I'm now 55." In the intervening years, Ford admits to battling a "pretty serious" drug problem and drifting in and out of homelessness. But he has worked in corporate finance for the past 15 years and has come some way to reconciling himself with the rollercoaster that was making the oddest space movie any of us is ever likely to see. "The best bit of making *Vegas In Space*?" he muses. "For a while, I found my family. I found my artistic family." ●

KEY MOMENTS IN QUEER CINEMA

VEGAS IN SPACE MAY NOT HAVE FOUND A MASS AUDIENCE, BUT THESE LGBTQ FILMS WERE LUCKIER...



VICTIM — 1961

Dirk Bogarde's closeted barrister is the victim of blackmail in the first English-language film to use the word "homosexual". Its sympathetic portrayal is often credited with helping to liberalise British laws and soften prejudice.

THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA, QUEEN OF THE DESERT — 1994

Stephan Elliott's gorgeous and tender culture-clash road-trip film won a swag of Best Costume Design awards, including an Oscar, but the actors under the frocks were the heart of the film, especially Terence Stamp in an affecting turn as transgender woman Bernadette.

BOYS DON'T CRY — 1999

Kimberly Peirce's Oscar-winning film is based on the real-life story of murdered trans man Brandon Teena. Peirce keeps the focus tight on the story of Brandon and his girlfriend Lana, rather than sensationalising his tragic death, giving this devastating emotional power.

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN — 2005

Ang Lee's beautiful, lyrical love story illustrates the profound damage that a closeted life can cause, as two cowboys fall in love, only to then spend a lifetime trying to hide their feelings from their closest family.

BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOUR — 2013

This coming-of-age story about a young woman's first affair is so authentic that even its startlingly explicit sex scenes did not distract critics from its emotional core.

Stunning breakthrough performances from Adèle Exarchopoulos and Léa Seydoux also helped.

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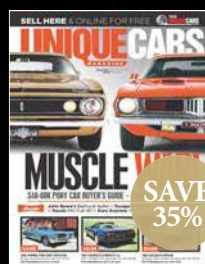
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P112

STORY OF THE SHOT **P106**

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TAKES FIVE BMX BANDITS ON
THE RIDE OF THEIR LIVES.
THE SUPER MOON SHINES
AND THE WORLD WEEPS...



NEW RELEASES P100

Read on for Klingons on the starboard bow, zombies in lederhosen and the new sport of competitive tickling.



TV AND STREAMING P108

The Avengers do battle with Jon Snow in the Wild West while a real detective looks on. Now *that* would be a TV show.



GAMES P110

Duty calls again. And this time it's war! And it's infinite! That's pretty big. Especially if you've been dishonoured.



CLASSIC SCENE P114

"1, 2, 3 and to the 4, 1 pac, 2 pac, 3 pac, 4, 4 pac, 3 pac, 2 pac, 1, you're pac, he's pac, no pacs, none," said Pac-Man.

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STAR TREK BEYOND

★★★★★

FROM NOW / RATED M / DIRECTOR Justin Lin / CAST Chris Pine, Simon Pegg, Zachary Quinto, John Cho, Zoe Saldana, Karl Urban

DVD BR

One step beyond...



AFTER SUCCESSFULLY kick-starting the *Star Trek* franchise, JJ Abrams hands over the keys of the USS Enterprise to *Fast and Furious 6*'s Justin Lin.

While unsurprisingly the action and spectacular effects quotient is raised, hardly anything else resonates. This feels like a stale, reheated, extended edition of Gene Roddenberry's TV show; tired and by the numbers; its young cast already uninspired. Spock (Quinto) and Uhura's (Saldana) lover's spat is high school level dull. Even the late Anton Yelchin's final performance fails to generate a poignant kick to the heart.

Simon Pegg pulls double duty, reprising his role as Montgomery "Scotty" Scott and co-writing the lazy script. Five years on from *Into Darkness*, the Enterprise continues exploring the galaxy, and is confronted by new menace, Krall (Elba). Kirk (Pine), Spock, Scotty, and Bones (Urban) are stranded on a deserted, uncharted planet. With help from Sophie Boutella's alien, Jayla (a spiky, arse kicking shot of adrenaline), they must use all their skill and ingenuity to make it back in time to save Starbase from annihilation.

While Abrams had reinvigorated *Star Trek* with energy and excited wonderment, the one chink in the armour has always been uninteresting villains. Idris Elba's Krall continues the curse. Elba's typically commanding presence barely registers under thick latex, and it's a struggle to muster any interest in Krall's cliché motivation: an unresolved beef with the Federation. It's as complex as a children's picture book baddie. *Star Trek Beyond* doesn't boldly go anywhere we haven't gone before. Unengaged.

EXTRAS Deleted scenes, featurettes, gag reel, *For Leonard And Anton* tribute. A bonus disc on the Special BD edition adds more featurettes, trailers and a Rhianna music clip.

JOHN CATANIA

THE EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

Boldly going into the sci-fi sequel with writers Simon Pegg and Doug Jung



00.04.13

966 DAYS __ When we meet up with the crew of the Starship Enterprise, they're three years into their five-year mission. Or 966 days, to be precise. "We realised that would be fun, because 966 was relevant to the 50th anniversary," says Simon Pegg, the film's co-writer. (The original series of *Star Trek* aired in September of 1966.) "We never saw what happened to Kirk & co beyond this point, because the show got cancelled. So we filled the gap."



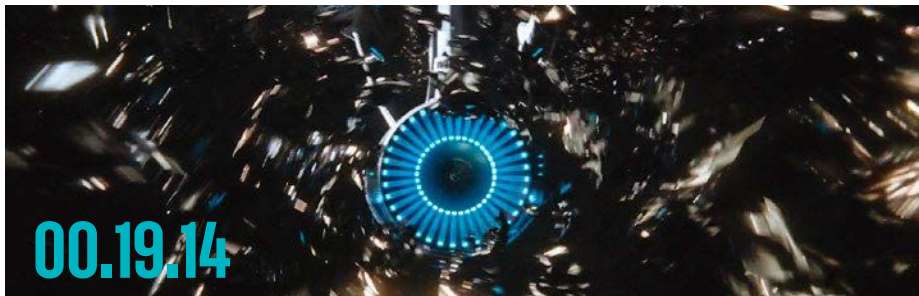
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THE OTHER MR SULU __ When the Enterprise docks at Yorktown, John Cho's Lt Sulu is met by his daughter and husband. In case you missed the hubbub upon release, Sulu is gay. But even if not, you might not have realised husband Ben is played by co-writer Doug Jung. "That was not by design," laughs Jung. "John had requested an Asian actor for that role, and the pool for that is limited in Dubai [where the scenes were shot]."



00.12.04

FAREWELL, SPOCK __ Also at Yorktown, Spock (Zachary Quinto) receives the sad news that his future self, Leonard Nimoy's Ambassador Spock, has passed away. Pegg and Jung had just started planning the movie when Nimoy died in February 2015. "We thought it made absolute sense to make his passing a part of the movie in a very meaningful way," says Pegg. "It was just beautifully poetic."



00.19.14

THE SWARM __ While answering a distress call on the other side of a nebula, the Enterprise is shocked by a savage attack from the villainous Krall (Idris Elba) and his drone army. Jung says the idea stemmed from a desire to challenge the

"assymetrical warfare" that had previously defined *Trek*. "Why is it that two ships end up across from each other in the vastness of space? Why don't they have a smaller ship that goes after them?"

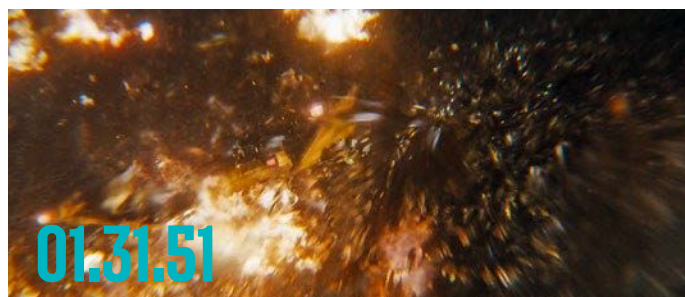
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THE SHIP HITS THE FAN

Outmatched by the swarm, Kirk orders the evacuation of the Enterprise and watches as his ship is abandoned on the planet Altamid. "I remember having stand-up rows with Justin Lin about it, because we've seen it before [*in The Search For Spock and Generations*]," says Pegg of the death of the Enterprise. "But Justin said, 'I want to take away the thing that bonds the crew together.' I realised he was right."



SPOCK SWEARS! "It's always a joyous moment when you see Spock's humanity get the better of him slightly," says Pegg of the moment when Spock, beginning to feel the effects of a sucking stomach wound, swears. Or, to be more precise, says, "Horseshit." Later, he will even weep, and laugh at one of Bones's jokes. "He's so delirious that he allows his humanity to surface. His swearing is a glitchy pre-cursor to that."



FANTASTIC BEASTIES The film's stand-out moment sees Kirk and crew, now aboard the newly fixed (old starship) USS Franklin, thwart Krall and his swarm by blasting a disruptive frequency. "Originally it was soul classic *Big Bird*," says Pegg, adding that initially Krall was revealed as a hoarder of Earth memorabilia. "Justin's idea was Beastie Boys' *Sabotage* – it was in the first movie, and as a song you can't get more on the nose."



01.38.18

KRALL UNVEILED Uhura (Zoe Saldana) discovers that Krall is actually Balthazar Edison, the centuries-old captain of the USS Franklin, a starship presumed lost. This shot, one of the few where Elba isn't caked in make-up, was a late addition. "Initially it was a crew photograph," says Pegg. "What Zoe's reacting to, what we shot on the day, was a picture of Edison. We wanted to make sure the moment was hammered home."



FOR ANTON "It still doesn't feel real," says Pegg of the tragic death of Anton Yelchin, just a few weeks before the film's release in July. Reeling from events, Lin re-edited the film's final toast so the line, "To absent friends," now plays

over a shot of Yelchin. "That line was in the movie because we lose a number of crewmates," adds Pegg. "Justin dug out all of Anton's coverage and cut that into the film. I'm so proud of him for doing that."



01.58.08

NEW ENTERPRISE The film ends with the rebirth of the Enterprise, as it launches into space on its maiden voyage. "We did talk about redesigning the Enterprise," says Pegg. But, mindful of fan feedback, it was decided to leave well alone. "You can only push your luck so far."

Slough

- 01 More convenient than a Tesco Express,
 02 Close to Windsor but the property's less.
 It keeps the business of Britain great,
 03 It's got Europe's biggest trading estate.
 It doesn't matter where you're from,
 You wanna work? Then come along!
 04 The station's just got a new floor,
 05 And the motorway runs by your door.

- And you know just where you're headin'
 06 It's equidistant 'tween London and Reading.
 07 Oh Slough - my kinda town
 I don't know how,
 08 Anyone could put you down.

- To the west you've got Taplow and Bray,
 You've got Millington the other way. 09
 It's a brilliant place to live and work,
 It was in Bucks now officially it's Berks. 10
 Don't believe what the critics say,
 Like it's soulless and and boring and grey. 11
 See for yourself, what you waiting for?
 12 We're on the Bath Road. That's the A4.

- 13 Slough (x3) Oh, Slough ♡



PUTTING THE SOUL IN SLOUGH

Ricky Gervais dissects the lyrics of David Brent

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

THE STAND-OUT OF *David Brent: Life On The Road*, Ricky Gervais's long-awaited follow-up to *The Office*, was undoubtedly the many songs 'written' by Brent. And our favourite track was the heartfelt *Slough*, Brent's love letter to his hometown. So we asked Gervais to talk us through the lyrics.

01 — "Brent would be very proud of that lyric. The first compliment about Slough is that it's in a good place. A place doesn't choose where it is."

02 — "This is an accidental diss. There's always a reason why the property in one area is a lot less than the property in another. I know people who pretend that their address is Windsor because it's just on the border."

03 — "It's a little throwback to *The Office*, the line about a trading estate."

04 — "That is true. Brent is very proud that everything in this song is factually accurate. Brent is such a man out of time — nobody cares about facts anymore."

05 — "The second diss. This is not a good thing. He's accidentally painting a very grey, industrialised picture of Slough. The boasts are not very sexy."

06 — "I'm very proud of this lyric. I don't think, outside of 15th-century folk music, there's ever been a 'tween' in a rock song and I know there's never been equidistant. It's Brent's lovely attempt to be erudite and articulate and interesting, and he blows it."

07 — "He's ripping off Sinatra, with *My Kind Of Town*. I'm not one to diss Slough, but Chicago is, historically, a cooler, more vibrant place. I'm playing with Brent trying to be sexy here."

08 — "He's still fed up with John Betjeman [*whose poem, Slough, begins, "Come, friendly bombs, and fall on Slough"*]. He's never let that go."

09 — "I chuckled when I thought of this lyric. But I do like that small-town mentality, where you do know all of those places around you. I like that, that your small world is big to you. That's very highfalutin, isn't it, for a dopey song about Slough?"

10 — "Nothing rhymes with Berkshire. I cheated



a little bit. It's pronounced Barkshire, but they say 'Berks', as opposed to 'Barks'. So it's a totally valid rhyme — I won't have a word said against it."

11 — "If you're doing a love letter in a song, don't put in the terrible things people say about it. He didn't have to bring that up. It's like going up to someone and saying, 'I know everyone thinks you're a twat, but I don't.'"

12 — "He had to say the official number for the Bath Road. He's very excited about that. I love that Brent gets bogged down with admin. It's sweet."

13 — "And repeat to fade. The important thing is that these are not comedy songs. They're serious songs by a comedy character, who can't write brilliant songs. He's not aware these songs are funny. David Brent thinks they're Springsteen or Dylan songs. But who's going to take a 55-year-old sales rep seriously?"

DAVID BRENT: LIFE ON THE ROAD IS OUT ON 14 DECEMBER ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD. THE DAVID BRENT SONGBOOK IS OUT NOW



DAVID BRENT:
LIFE ON
THE ROAD
★★★★★
RATED MA15+

What we said:

"Excruciating as ever, David Brent cleaves closer to sad clown in his feature length outing. The's a good thing but too much Brent is not." **Notable extras:** Gervais commentary, making of documentary, outtakes and Brent music videos.



I AM BOLT

★★★★★

FROM NOW / RATED PG DVD BR Apple

PERHAPS THERE'S A more penetrating film to be made once sprinter extraordinaire Usain Bolt is out of the clutches of his multi-million dollar sponsors, but this documentary is a more than solid place-holder until then. Following him as he trains for this year's Olympics, intercutting the story of his career up to this year, there's not much beyond a hagiography — he can't be this straightforward, can he? — but the footage of him training is fascinating, and seeing his multiple Olympic triumphs is genuinely spectacular. Right now the people want their smiling goofball genius, and this delivers exactly that — a hefty dose of Bolt's billion-dollar charm, and then some. Sometimes hero worship is okay if you're worshipping someone who is deserving of it.

EXTRAS Making-of.

ANDREW LOWRY



LONDON ROAD

★★★★★

FROM 7 DECEMBER / RATED MA15+ DVD Apple

IN 2006 FIVE bodies of local prostitutes from the London Road area of Ipswich were discovered. Traumatized, the community sought to deal with the aftermath and the hunt for the killer. Now this macabre true story may seem an unlikely inspiration for this musical, which was a hit on the London stage. A fascinating examination of a curtain-twitching community floored by the killings and resulting media circus, the script and songs use real dialogue recorded at the time. Olivia Colman is excellent as a concerned/appalled neighbour of the murderer, while Tom Hardy is a taxi driver with a troubling obsession with serial killers. All cast and crew do an impressive job in making this unlikely proposition such an engaging, thought-provoking and darkly funny watch.

EXTRAS None. ANNA SMITH



ATTACK OF THE LEDERHOSEN ZOMBIES

★★★★★

FROM DECEMBER 14 / RATED MA15+ DVD Apple

NOVELTY IS BECOMING a rare commodity in the zom-com sub-genre, but Austrian Dominik Hartl comes up with some innovative ways to slay the walking dead in this tale of snowboarders and a batch of toxic fake snow. Essentially this is *Green Room* with flesh eaters instead of white supremacists. The set-up is perfunctory and predictable, while the performances are more bullish than accomplished. But the make-up effects and animatronics belie the modest budget, as gore and innards are splattered about with the aid of some snowboards, ski poles and a snowblower. Still, it's not all knowing horror, a romantic dance routine involving some music-soothed zombies providing welcome and touching moments of calm amid the madness. Just ignore the fact that Hartl's schlocker doesn't contain a single zombie in lederhosen.

EXTRAS None. DAVID PARKINSON



TICKLED

★★★★★

FROM DECEMBER 7 / RATED MA15+ DVD Apple

WITH ITS JAUNTY music and chin-stroke-while-raising-eyebrow tone, Kiwi doco *Tickled* starts out like it's going to be a bit of a lark. While researching one of his 'And Finally...' stories for *3 News*, co-director David Farrier came across a website asking for volunteers to take part in "Competitive Endurance Tickling", and thought it would make a funny "light entertainment" piece. So he contacted the company behind this odd sport... And, in response, received homophobic slurs and cease-and-desist threats from lawyers. Gradually, insidiously, as Farrier digs deeper, the lark turns dark. It's a crazy, rolling-snowball narrative that is unexpected, and genuinely disturbing. Though Farrier drops the pace and overplays his reveal, it feels like Louis Theroux shooting a conspiracy thriller. Tickling, it seems, is no laughing matter.

EXTRAS None. DAN JOLIN

BEST OF TIMES | WORST OF TIMES

BRENT SPINER

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

COSTUME



I'm working with a pretty cool costume right now on the TV series *Outcast*. I'm a mysterious character who wears a black suit and a black hat. I look much more threatening and interesting than I ever have before. Certainly more interesting than I did when I was wearing gold make-up!



The first-season costumes on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* were horrendous. They were spandex one-pieces and strapped under the boots, so they pulled your shoulders down all day long for 16 hours. It was so uncomfortable! But they got better after that, and became two-piece.

FAN ENCOUNTER

There have been so many, but if I have to narrow it down to one, I'll go with Dr Oliver Sacks. He was, of course, renowned for his work in the field of autism. He told me that he had a patient who could only relate to the character of Data. In fact, he said I was the poster boy for autism. I was and still am honoured.



I'd have to say a series of letters over several years from a fan threatening to kill me. Apparently, he wasn't a fan of my acting and felt it would be better for all if he did away with me. Fortunately, after seeing my work in *Dude, Where's My Car?* he decided to let me live. I think he pitied me too much to kill me.

AUDITION

The best audition I ever had was for *Out To Sea*, because I re-wrote the audition scene. The producers and director were in the room and we did my scene. I found out later as I walked out that the producer said, "What was that? Who does he think he is?" And the director, Martha Coolidge said, "Let's hire him..." It kind of worked to my advantage.

One time I auditioned for *Taming Of The Shrew* [which was playing] at the New York Shakespeare Festival. Meryl Streep and Raúl Juliá were the leads. The director told me it was wonderful. I went back to California and got a call saying I'd got the part, but had to do a courtesy audition for the director of the festival. I went straight from the airport to the audition, and the [festival] director said, "I don't think he's right for this..."

LOCATION



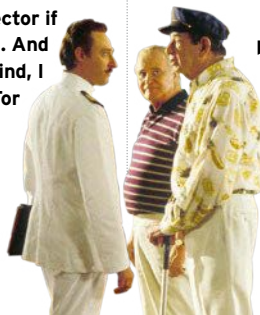
I've always envied people who have gone to Paris, Rome and the Riviera to shoot. I've made two movies in Yazoo City, Mississippi! But I'd say the soundstages at Paramount. It was always a thrill to walk past the dressing-room building Bing Crosby and Bob Hope used.



Right now, we're shooting *Outcast* in South Carolina. And there are times when it's three in the morning in the middle of the woods and it's freezing. But I'm still kind of grateful to be there. Every place has its charm and, bottom line, I'm working!

MOMENT

I did *Out To Sea* with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, which was already a high-water mark for me. Jack Lemmon asked the director if he could try out a bit he had in mind. And it didn't work. I said, "If you don't mind, I think I know how to make it work." For me to be able to tell Jack Lemmon how to make a comedy bit work was like dying and going to heaven.



Doing *The Seagull* at the Public Theater in New York. I came out at the end and saw Lauren Bacall and Arthur Laurents, the playwright behind *West Side Story*. They booed me!

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE IS
OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND
DOWNLOAD



THE FIRST TAKE CLUB

THIS MONTH:
IAN RANKIN

Creator of the
John Rebus novels

WATCHES:

AMÉLIE



THE IDEA OF THE First-Take Club is simple. Every month, we ask someone to select a film they haven't seen from Empire's 500 Greatest Movies Of All Time list (published in 2013). Then they watch it and tell us what they thought. This month's inductee is Ian Rankin, one of Britain's finest novelists and best known as the creator of the hugely successful John Rebus series. Read a Rebus novel and you'll know Rankin is a man with his finger on the pop-culture pulse, so we worried he might have seen the whole list. Turns out one had

escaped his gaze: a French movie renowned for its whimsy, achingly cool lead character and ace score. It is, of course, *Amélie*. So, Ian, what did you make of the film our readers deemed the 204th-greatest ever made?

Mysteries are central to my work as a crime writer, yet here's one I'm struggling to unravel: just why I hadn't seen *Amélie*. A few years back, I was invited to be guest curator at the (small-but-perfectly-formed) Cromarty Film Festival. I had to pick one film I thought might be new to the audience and which they would fall in love with. I chose *MicMac's* by director Jean-Pierre Jeunet. It is one of my favourite comedies, and a film of near-endless invention and brio. I'd also been a fan of his earlier film *Delicatessen*. Yet I'd not watched *Amélie* — a film my wife has seen at least once and which my son Jack rates (with *The Big Lebowski*) as one of his two favourite films. So why was I immune for so long? One clue may be the DVD artwork. It's almost too cute, with doe-eyed Audrey Tautou channelling Audrey Hepburn, albeit with a Gallic twist. It looks like a nice film about a nice person doing nice things. I think I got the notion it was a charming romance and a love-letter to Paris, and neither of those fills me with *joie de vivre*. But I should have remembered *MicMac's* has some steel at its heart, and that Jeunet worked on *Alien: Resurrection* and *The City Of Lost Children* — neither the fluffiest of confections.

Now that I've finally watched *Amélie*, we must go back to the DVD again, and a prominent quote on the front from a film magazine other than *Empire*. It reads, "Quite simply it's perfect." Well, quite simply, it ain't, but

I'm still glad I spent time with it. Audrey Tautou is the personification of pixie-like charm and quirky innocence. Paris looks stunning (and unbelievably empty for the most part). The saturated colours work well, and it's a film made by people with an obvious passion for moviemaking. I even laughed out loud at a couple of moments (both of them featuring sexual congress, if memory serves). And yet...

Maybe it tries a little bit too hard. No character is allowed not to be eccentric, from the artist with brittle bones to the boorish shopkeeper, not to mention Mathieu Kassovitz as a young man who fills albums with rejected offerings from Photo-Me booths. Jeunet throws the kitchen sink at the viewer, including objects in Amélie's bedroom suddenly coming to life, and additional talking photographs. Her pursuit of the man she's fallen for is drawn-out and ridiculously serpentine, while she fixes up one of her workmates at the café-bar with a customer whose manifest hang-ups ensure it will end in tears. Added to which her revenge on the shopkeeper didn't convince me for a moment. But Paris does look magical, there is some ingenious plotting, and the soundtrack is great. It is two hours long and started to feel it towards the end, but it is watchable, entertaining and so very, very French. I viewed it alongside Jack, who was seeing it for maybe the fifth or sixth time and seemed transfixed throughout. I liked it well enough, though it will never replace *MicMac's* in my affections. *C'est vrai, mes copains*.

RATHER BE THE DEVIL, IAN RANKIN'S 21ST JOHN REBUS NOVEL, IS OUT NOW IN HARDBACK



Moon showed off its new BMX tattoo.

STORY OF THE SHOT

E.T.: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

WORDS IAN FREER

DENNIS MUREN HAS a confession to make about the first time he saw Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*. "I didn't get it," laughs the ILM visual effects supervisor. "I saw an early version of the film with temporary sound and temporary music and it just didn't work. You could hear the motors on E.T. when he was turning his head." Priced at a thrifty \$10 million *E.T.* was, according to Muren, "low on ILM's totem pole" in early 1982, due to big effects hitters *Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan* and the Spielberg-produced *Poltergeist*. Still, Muren and his team created one of cinema's most indelible images: Elliott (Henry Thomas), E.T. in basket, flying his bicycle across a rich full moon.

E.T.'s signature shot was not in Melissa Mathison's screenplay. Instead it sprang directly from Spielberg's imagination, the silhouette idea influenced by Disney's *Peter Pan*. Muren looked at using a mechanised puppet but went with a go-motion approach, an upgrade on traditional stop motion that added realistic blur. Elliott was constructed as a 15 1/2" puppet. His bicycle, based on Kuwahara dirt bike designs, boasted an astonishing level of detail. Even the brakes worked.

"*E.T.* holds up in large part because there is a hand-made feeling to the movie," says producer Kathleen Kennedy. "But there was also a simplicity to what we were doing that was purely in service to story. Elliott and E.T. don't go on a tourist-type viewing during their flight. They go straight to the landing site. It's classic."

Although it appears mid-way through the film, the image was shot after the chase into the

sunset that ends the movie. Having learnt from the first flight, ILM programmed less movement in the Elliott puppet, as if he was scared he might dump E.T. out of the basket. Muren also added in bumps to simulate the bicycle being buffeted by currents. "I had it slightly going up hill, not going flat because I thought it would be a little bit more of a challenge, a little bit more optimistic," he says.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was the silvery moon. Muren sent cameraman Mike McAlister to a valley in Nicasio, near ILM, with a huge 1,000mm lens to capture a classic lunar rising. Never knowing just when and where the moon was going to appear, McAlister recalled spending "night after night in the cold". "A lot of reviews said ILM's contribution was seamless," says Kennedy. "It was because we didn't want a sky with a silver moon to say, 'Isn't that a great effects shot?' We wanted it to look like we shot that perfect night moon."

Add John Williams's score, and the moment is a tribute to the power of flight, magic and soaring imaginations. It would become a cultural riffing point — perhaps most memorably *The Naked Gun 2 1/2* sent Richard Griffiths over the moon in a wheelchair — but also gifted the fledgling Amblin Entertainment a good-to-go logo. "That came from the excitement of *E.T.*'s success," claims Kennedy. "It came to define what Amblin was all about." And, to some extent, the power of movies as a whole.

E.T.: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD



THE MAN FROM HONG KONG

★★★★★

1975 / FROM NOW / RATED MA15+ DVD BR

THEY DON'T MAKE them like this anymore. Made when film was cheap and stunt men were cheaper, Brian Trenchard-Smith's adrenaline charged Ozploitation classic, in a stunning 4K transfer, is a brilliantly entertaining actioner that uses iconic Aussie locations like never before. Or since. Jimmy Yu stars as Inspector Fang Sing Leng, a Chinese cop who heads Down Under to extradite a drug dealer and gets on the bad side of George Lazenby's "ruthless czar of international evil". Cue bonkers set pieces and crazy stunts as our hero fights atop Uluru, hang-glides over Sydney Harbour and defies death climbing skyscrapers. It's amazing they didn't kill someone.

EXTRAS Commentary, interviews, newsreel footage, making-of plus five bonus movies: *Deathcheaters*, *Stunt Rock*, *Kung Fu Killers*, *Danger Freaks* and *The Stuntmen*.

DAVID MICHAEL BROWN



THE BLOB

★★★★★

1988 / FROM NOW / RATED M DVD BR

THE PINKEST FILM this side of *The Greasy Strangler*, Chuck Russell's remake of the Steve McQueen-starring '50s monster movie is a gloriously squelchy affair. An alien invasion flick back when extra-terrestrials didn't want to shake our hand unless they were going to rip it off, *The Blob*'s physical FX, courtesy of Tony Gardner (*Army Of Darkness*, *Zombieland*) are eye-poppingly gloopy as the titular blob of amorphous space matter melts and absorbs anyone it comes into contact with. Luckily there is a kid from the wrong side of the tracks to save the day, a role made famous in the original by a young McQueen and now played by Kevin Dillon. An adoring remake, co-written by the director and Frank Darabont, this *Blob* is still in the pink.

EXTRAS Interview, featurette and trailer. RORY MEYER

THIEF

★★★★★

1981 / FROM DECEMBER 7 / RATED R18+ / DIRECTOR Michael Mann / CAST James Caan, Tuesday Weld, Willie Nelson, Jim Belushi, Dennis Farina

DVD BR

The dawn of Mann



AS A YOUNG screenwriter, working on a failed draft of Dustin Hoffman's *Straight Time*, Michael Mann took a trip to Folsom Prison in California. "The colour comes out of the research,"

he explains, the scholarly expert to James Caan's wiseguy on this Blu-ray's odd-couple commentary. Off the back of that trip, Mann wrote two screenplays at the same time: *Heat* and *Thief*. These detailed, measured, almost philosophical studies of the lives of two crack burglars and ex-cons, set in different cities, in vastly different decades, remain clear companion pieces and the calling cards of Mann's feature-film depictions of the clockwork of crime. If *Heat* was to become his signature film, it was *Thief* that unrolled the blueprint for Mann's meticulous aesthetic.

Bathed in both the jewellery-box shimmer of nocturnal Chicago, looking magnificent in a new Mann-supervised transfer, and the dated yet fitting synth score by Tangerine Dream, we trace Caan's spiritually worn safecracker, Frank, in his attempts to retire and get himself a wife, kids and a regular-type life. He just needs to take one last job... Where the Chicago Mafia are just around the corner.

More than with *Heat*'s Neil McCauley, *Thief*, based on the life of professional jewel thief



"Caan, ya caans!": James Caan

John Santucci, portrays the dehumanising effect of prison. Even Frank's attempt to woo coffee-shop waitress Tuesday Weld feels like a man planning a score. In Folsom, Mann became fascinated by the demeanour of the high-end thieves. How it was all about discipline. There is not a single contraction in Frank's lines. "Talk very slowly and distinctly," explains Caan, "and you never have to repeat yourself."

EXTRAS The director's cut, a trailer plus a jovial commentary with Michael Mann and James Caan: "After *The Godfather*, unless there were 12 dead by page 10, I didn't get offered it".

IAN NATHAN



WILD ORCHID

★★★★★

1989 / FROM NOW / RATED R18+ DVD BR

IN THE LATE '80s, Mickey Rourke's rise to stardom as a method-acting sex symbol was about to make a downward turn. His

steamy edible trysts with Kim Basinger in *9 1/2 Weeks* had elevated the pugilistic thespian to housewife's crumpet of choice and his bloody business time with Lisa Bonet in *Angel Heart* had set pulses racing, but in softcore pornographer Zalman King's *Wild Orchid* he was beginning to believe in his own legend. Rourke sleepwalks through the role of James Wheeler, the uber-tanned multi millionaire who sweeps a wooden Carrie Otis – wearing glasses to sell her multi-lingual international lawyer – off her feet. There's a sub-plot about a hotel sale that bores while Rourke, sporting a terribly gauche line in fashions, pontificates like a pretentious Hallmark card and tries to get into Otis's pants. When he does, despite the rumours of actual on-set shenanigans, sparks do not fly. Even the vibrant Rio locations, shot during Carnival, fizzle. A limp fiasco for all involved.

EXTRAS None. DAVID MICHAEL BROWN

KIDS WATCH CLASSICS

Big films tackled by little people

ILLUSTRATION OLLY GIBBS



MAX JOLIN — 6 SINGIN' IN THE RAIN

Did you enjoy *Singin' In The Rain*?

I very much liked it. I liked all the tricks that Don [Gene Kelly] did. I think he's very elegant. It's elegant when he's skipping along with the umbrella behind his back.

What would you say the film is about?

Well, it starts in a big place with lots and lots and lots of people and there are cars with very famous people, and it's set in Hollywood and some very famous people come out. So there's Don, who is the main character, and he's with someone... He hasn't got married to her, but Lina [Jean Hagen] is her name and I don't really like her. She's quite annoying and irritating. She has a high, squeaky voice.

Did you understand the stuff about how all the films at that time had no talking in them?

Yes. I was a bit weirded out by it.

Can you imagine going to the cinema and every film you'd see was silent?

Yeah. It would be a bit boring. Even if it was *Star Wars*!

During the film you said, "Actors are playing actors!" Was that interesting?

Yes, because I just think it's cool. It was quite interesting. I liked all of the films they made. I liked it when Don ran into that building and then they blew it up.

You seemed quite taken by Don's friend, Cosmo [Donald O'Connor]...

Yeah. Well, he's extremely funny. I liked it when he is dancing and fighting with that dummy, and I liked it when he did that backflip on the wall. And I like the song that he did, *Make 'Em Laugh*... I wish Cosmo was my dad.

Your dad?! Why's that?

He could teach me tricks. [Long, thoughtful pause] And he's very tall.



BINGEWATCH

Each month, our marathon man straps himself to a sofa for a viewing fest. Pray for him

THIS MONTH: SPIDER-MAN

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**

ILLUSTRATION **PETER STRAIN**

WATCHING SPIDER-MAN'S

evolution as a live-action hero is quite an experience. In fact, it's weirdly similar to Peter Parker's struggles with his own powers: there are soaring highs, wonky landings, skids, scrapes and face-plants into brick walls, but he always gets back up again. Canned after 13 episodes, CBS' '70s series offers an unforgiving lesson in how *not* to adapt Marvel's mascot and is where our Spider-Binge begins.

Nicholas Hammond was pushing 30 when he played Peter Parker, but that's the least of its problems; the analogue era simply couldn't cope. Armed with Silly String web-shooters, wobbly abseiling skills and eyes that look suspiciously like egg poachers, Hammond's Spidey has all the agility of a concrete chimp. The ropery FX are understandable; what's baffling is the vision: for the pilot, which somehow got released in cinemas, Spidey battles a bank-robbing brainwasher called The Guru. Serving up generic renta-thugs, this Spidey is just another '70s crime-fighter: The Six Million Dollar Man in fancy Spandex.

It wasn't until the CGI boom, some 25 years later, that Spider-Man emerged fully formed. In an age where Marvel's multiverse movies share a uniform style, Sam Raimi's trilogy plays extra-crazed now: they're auteur studio movies, buzzing with Raimi's distinct manic flair. You feel

like you're watching Steve Ditko's panels in cinematic form. Likewise Tobey Maguire's angsty Peter Parker, a winning loser cut straight from the '60s comic. Given Raimi's horror chops, the original flirts with daring ideas (Parker's hormonal howls suggest a werewolf movie in superhero clobber), but I'd argue *Spider-Man 2* is one of *the* great superhero movies. Urged into epic misdeeds against the will of their saner alter-egos, Spider-Man has a tradition of conflicted schizo villains. Alfred Molina's Doc Ock — fully fleshed, lethal but poignant — remains the gold-standard nemesis. The tragedy is Raimi's comic-opera went so off-key with *Spider-Man 3* and its musical interludes (Spider-Man and tunes don't go: just ask U2). Cursed with an overloaded script, Raimi's less directing, more furiously bashing a plot *piñata*. Hence the finale featuring Venom, Sandman and Green Goblin 2.0: a villain pile-up not seen since *Batman & Robin*.

From Too Much to Too Soon. Released five years later, Marc Webb's *The Amazing Spider-Man* is the *Eternal Sunshine* of superhero movies — Raimi's films are erased, like an inconvenient memory, and replaced with an uncannily identikit origin story. Unlike Maguire's genial geek, Andrew Garfield's Peter Parker is a skaterboy outcast. (Or possibly Peter Parkour: Spidey's free-running stuntwork is the reboot's most

striking addition.) Based on Marvel's millennial *Ultimate Spider-Man*, I find Garfield's emo Parker too worldly to connect. Maybe it's the first Spidey movie to work better out of the suit (Garfield's romance with Emma Stone crackles), but the Dark Knightier, reality-grounded approach stops a fun character from soaring. Neither reboot nor sequel offer a memorable nemesis: Jamie Foxx's Electro is as underwhelming as Rhys Ifans's Lizard, whose dinosaur super-race master plan seems to have been filched from, of all things, Bob Hoskins's *Super Mario Bros*.

After Sony struck a deal granting Marvel the right to use Spidey last year, Garfield was rapidly recast. Tom Holland's cameo was, for me, the highlight of *Captain America: Civil War*: Peter Parker's barely six months into his crime-fighting hobby, callow, cocky and totally out of his depth as a boy amongst supermen. His rubbish Spider-onesie suit is hilarious. Likewise his, "I've got homework," excuse to Tony Stark.

By harking back to the retro Ditko era, Spider-Man's future suddenly looks bright again. Although he's getting younger and younger with every incarnation. Give it a decade and we'll probably end up with Spider-Toddler.

THE SPIDER-MAN MOVIES ARE PUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DIGITAL DOWNLOAD



Mugging lamps: serious business.

THE AVENGERS: THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

★★★★★

FROM **DECEMBER 7** / RATED **PG** / **CREATOR** Sydney Newman / **CAST** Patrick Macnee, Diana Rigg, Honor Blackman, Linda Thorson, Ian Hendry

DVD

Chapeau melon et bottes de cuir



WITH THE STIFFIST

of upper lips and a fine line in '60s grooviness, quirky spy caper *The Avengers* is a quintessentially British treat that still delivers excitement and humour aplenty with style, charm and a healthy dash of cat-suited sexiness.

For nine years, starting in 1961, the crime-fighting show made household names of its leads as they saved the world from a dastardly cavalcade of moustache twirling bad guys. Patrick Macnee starred as the debonair agent John Steed, a bowler hat-wearing gent with a rapier wit and an equally sharp sword kept hidden in his brolly. A secondary character in the first series, playing second fiddle to Ian Hendry's Dr David Keel, Steed was promoted to lead sleuth in the second season, after Hendry left the show for a career in film. This is when Steed was

joined by the first of his iconic female side-kicks. Honor Blackman, in a role that led to her casting as Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger*, played the tough-talking, leather clad Cathy Gale. Gale was a ground-breaking role-model for British TV audiences not used to wanton portrayals of girl power on their goggle box. When 007 called and Blackman quit, she left big kinky boots to fill, but Diana Rigg was more than up for the task. Her tenure on *The Avengers* brought the show worldwide success. In colour. With a ravishing line in catsuits, Rigg's "English Rose" looks, a devastating line in karate chops and an obvious "will they, won't they" chemistry between her and Macnee, the fourth and fifth seasons are brilliantly entertaining.

With the arrival of Rigg's Mrs Peel, the episodes got racier ('The Hellfire Club'), added sci-fi into the mix ('The Cybernauts') and the hard-edged espionage dramas of old were replaced by frothy repartee and a kitsch aesthetic that continued into the show's final season. When Rigg left to pursue her career elsewhere, including her own stint as a Bond girl in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the unenviable task of following her was taken up by Linda Thorson as Tara King, Steed's final accomplice.

This definitive set treats *The Avengers* with the respect it deserves with 35mm transfers that sparkle. A pop-culture icon has been reborn.

Mrs Peel, we're needed.

EXTRAS 24 commentaries, featurettes, 14 episode reconstructions, interviews plus a bonus disc full of 50th anniversary celebrations.

DAVID MICHAEL BROWN



THE AMERICAN WEST

★★★★★

FROM **DECEMBER 7** / RATED **MA15+** DVD

A POP-HISTORY exploration of the American frontier after the Civil War, this docudrama mixes bloody re-enactments with historian narrators (and some actors who once played cowboys! History lessons from Burt Reynolds and Kiefer Sutherland!) to tell the interwoven stories of Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, General Custer and Wyatt Earp from 1865 to 1890. It's a bit like those "true crime" TV shows but with gunslingers. Fun, and informative in a non-Ken Burns way.

EXTRAS None. **TIM KEEN**

REVIEW TV & STREAMING



GAME OF THRONES: S6

★★★★★

FROM **NOW** / RATED **R18+** DVD BR

With Jon Snow dead, Daenerys in the clutches of the Dothraki, would-be assassin Arya Stark blind and her sister Sansa on the run, this season starts off about as grim as things can get. With the end of the series in sight though, this is where things finally start to turn. There's still plenty of twists – more than one seemingly dead character returns, while a renewed focus on Bran Stark's magic visions means more backstory – but this time not all the gory deaths are bad news. The ever-expanding cast is a drag (though pre-teen ruler Lyanna Mormont is brilliant) and some plotlines run in place, but *The Battle of the Bastards* is epic television and the simple phrase "Hold the door" is heart-breaking. No current show hits the high notes better.

EXTRAS Audio commentaries, deleted scenes, a host of featurettes including the making of the 'The Battle Of The Bastards'.

ANTHONY MORRIS



REAL DETECTIVE

★★★★★

FROM **DECEMBER 7** / RATED **M** DVD

THE CRIME RE-ENACTMENT genre relies heavily on story: find a gripping tale and the rest of the show will take care of itself. *Real Detective* takes a different approach. Each stand-alone episode features a compelling case, but the focus is on the investigators as much as the crime, creating something closer to a drama than the usual true-crime re-enactment. Presumably that's why name actors (well, actors you might recognise) play the lead each week in recreated scenes while the real detectives narrate their investigations. Cops get angry, cops make mistakes, cops get PTSD and have to resign from the force; the highlight is episode two, where Portland Detective CW Jensen (Tahmoh Penikett), still rattled after killing in the line of duty, takes on a missing child case that turns into a serial killer hunt.

EXTRAS None. **AM**



CALL OF DUTY: INFINITE WARFARE

★★★★★

OUT NOW / FORMATS PC, PS4, XBOX ONE

DIRECTOR Taylor Kurosaki CAST / Brian Bloom, Kit Harington, Claudia Black

He shoots! He scores!

THE LATEST INSTALMENT of Activision's perennial shooter franchise packs in a *lot* — single-player campaign, multiplayer, a new Zombies mode, flight missions for PlayStation VR, and even a fully fledged remake of 2007's *Modern Warfare* in higher-tier packages. Whatever else, you're definitely getting bang for your buck.

The solo campaign is serviceable, although it does a good job of drawing you into Nick Reyes's (Bloom) real conflict: whether the mission's success or your team's lives are more important in war. Credit for this largely goes to the voice cast, who do a stand-up job of selling characters little removed from the standard 'band of brothers' found in other military fables. But the story as a whole is hard to buy into, the SDF being little more than caricatured space fascists, with nationalistic slogans and a propaganda machine that only Donald Trump might think low-key.

Thankfully, *Infinite Warfare's* gameplay makes up for narrative blandness. Shooting gallery mechanics are livened up with futuristic weapons and armour that border on super-powered. Encounters are rarely dull, while set-pieces dotted around the Solar System delight, mixing variable gravity and harsh environments for some thrilling action. Aerial battles — both in planetary atmosphere and dogfights in space — and story-based side

missions (a *COD* first) are nice touches.

This all translates rather well into the multiplayer. While functionally similar to *Black Ops III*, *Infinite Warfare's* future tech abilities make it feel more like *Destiny* than traditional *COD*. This may anger franchise purists, but the wall runs and boost jumps pair perfectly with combat rigs offering customisable super moves — a favourite being the ability to shift into a savage dog-bot mode to maul opponents.

Meanwhile, in the 1980s, *Zombies In Spaceland* offers an entirely different multiplayer experience utterly divorced from the main game. Trapped in a theme park, with David Hasselhoff as the DJ, teams of four battle endless undead hordes. They're all predictable '80s stereotypes (jock, nerd, cheerleader etc) but there's no distinction in terms of controls. *Spaceland* is notably easier than previous *Zombies* modes, though, almost to the point of hand-holding, and you'll make it through numerous waves of enemies before breaking a sweat. There's a balance between challenge and fun to be struck, but it's not quite found here.

For everything *Infinite Warfare* does right, though, it's hard to ignore the fact that a whole lot of players will be in this purely for that remastered *Modern Warfare*, bundled in with the pricier Legacy and Deluxe editions.

Developed by Raven Software and packing in the full campaign and its own multiplayer (10 maps now, six more as downloadable content), *Moderner Warfare* is an unabashed love letter to *COD's* hardcore fans, retaining the original's storyline, mechanics and even sense of movement, while jacking the visuals up for 4K screens. It looks fantastic, but playing it highlights how much the series has evolved in the last decade — this feels slower and more punishing than *Infinite's* lightning-fast sci-fi shootouts.

And that seems to be the biggest problem with the package as a whole — *Infinite Warfare* wants to move the series forward, but can't quite let go of the past. **MATT KAMEN**



DISHONORED 2

★★★★★

OUT NOW / FORMATS PS4, XBOX ONE, PC

DIRECTORS Raphaël Colantonio, Harvey Smith

A WORTHY SEQUEL to the 2012 original, *Dishonored 2* builds on the steampunk aesthetic and ramps up the "choice and consequence" factor. You can take a stealth or a more blunt-force approach to the storyline, and you have a choice of two main characters, which means despite about a 12-hour play-through, this game rewards multiple replays. As in the first game, you have access to a variety of powers, including time-bending and "blinking" (a form of teleportation) — with practise, you can combine powers to brilliant and sometimes hilarious effect. The gameplay mechanics evolve through the game, forcing you to adapt with them. Challenging, intelligent, visually glorious.

BONUS FEATURE

IS TELEPORTING REALLY POSSIBLE?

Quantum physicist Prof David Reilly on Corvo's powers

In *Dishonored 2*, Corvo can bend time: possible or not?

Where we are in the scientific world, it's like those questions are given a life in this game. One thing that struck me about *Dishonored 2* is, I thought it did the time warping very well. It wasn't a switch to dial back time for the entire universe. To me, it's more realistic to imagine that you could illuminate how something looked in a previous time. That felt more realistic, as to how quantum physics may lead to technology that allows us to peer into a previous time and extract information.

What about teleportation?

Quantum teleportation is totally real. It's a little different to the teleportation you see in *Star Trek*. Quantum teleportation is transporting the quantum state of an atom to recreate it at a distance.

So it's more like 3D printing.
Yeah.



THE EMPIRE MASTERPIECE

Dirtier Harry.

THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT

1974 / RATED M / DIRECTOR MICHAEL CIMINO
CAST CLINT EASTWOOD, JEFF BRIDGES

Michael Cimino's buddy flick is also Clint Eastwood's most daring movie

WORDS ADAM SMITH

PERHAPS THE MOST surprising thing about *Thunderbolt And Lightfoot*, arguably Clint Eastwood's best film and certainly his most interesting, is that for a movie that revels in its own unpredictability and freewheeling style, one that nods both to the French New Wave and its scion, the New Hollywood, its origins were almost wholly corporate. In the early '70s Eastwood's William Morris agent, Leonard 'The Smiling Jackal' Hirshan, had been handed a screenplay by Michael Cimino, another Morris client and a hot former advertising kid-turned-writer of Douglas Trumbull's *Silent Running*. Unusually Hirshan forwarded it to Eastwood, who generally preferred to generate projects in-house at his production shingle Malpaso. It was an earlyish example of the agency-driven deal, the Hollywood model that was fast taking over, and which left agencies and independent producers in pole position.

Eastwood liked the story: superficially an amiable shaggy-dog tale about an old-time safe-breaker hiding out in the unlikely guise of a small-town preacher whose career is revived, and life restarted, by a chance encounter with a kind of manic pixie-dream drifter, in the shape of Jeff Bridges's Lightfoot (also a WM client). But there

was a wrinkle: Cimino wouldn't sell without himself attached to direct. The prospective star and director met and, perhaps surprisingly given the pair's very different styles and outlooks, hit it off. After extracting a quick rewrite of *Magnum Force* from Cimino as down payment, the neophyte director headed off to Big Sky Country to scout the movie's stunning locations. Meanwhile, Malpaso cut a deal with United Artists to provide the funding, and thus introduced Cimino to the studio he would later, mostly unfairly, be accused of destroying with *Heaven's Gate*.

It's not difficult to see what UA liked, or thought commercial, about the set-up. A buddy road movie charged with the twin star power of a post-*Dirty Harry* Eastwood (as the bank-robbing mastermind Thunderbolt) and a hot-to-trot Jeff Bridges, it had plenty of goofy comedy involving rednecks and trucks full of chickens, was goosed with enough (female) eye candy and violence for the drive-in hordes, and came capped with a vaguely wistful post-*Easy Rider* downbeat ending which would play to the counter-cultural crowd.

What they would actually get when Cimino delivered his cut was indeed a perfectly serviceable road flick, but it was so much more as well and, whisper it not, the most homoerotic movie set in the West until Jack and Ennis started making goo-goo eyes at each other over the livestock in *Brokeback Mountain*. Reading queer subtexts into apparently unlikely celluloid subject matter has been entertaining sport ever since Quentin Tarantino outed Maverick and Goose, but with *Thunderbolt And Lightfoot* there's not much sub to the text. The pair's earliest exchange after their initial meet cute, during which the younger man rescues Clint from an enraged George Kennedy, has Thunderbolt complimenting his new friend's peepers before requesting he remove his belt. By the third act Cimino finds himself only able to resolve the narrative's building sexual confictions

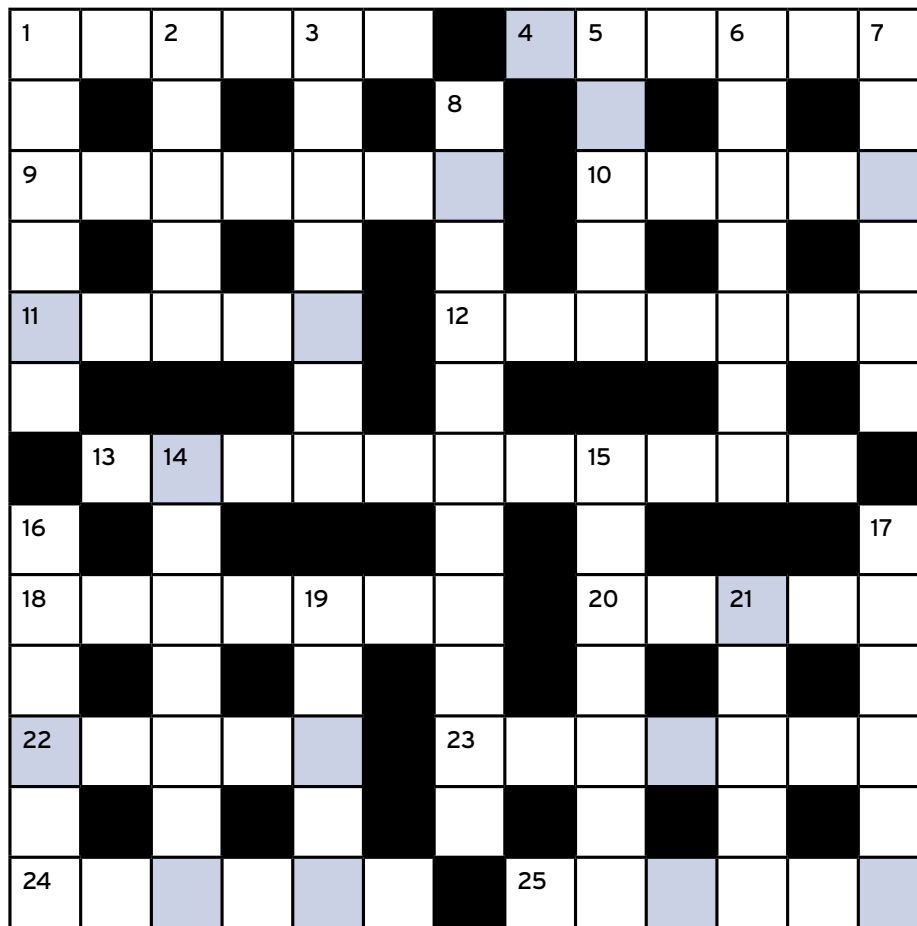
by sticking Lightfoot in a dress, one that Bridges wears surprisingly daintily, albeit while packing a revolver down the back of his pantyhose. Meanwhile the irresistibly tragic denouement doesn't so much nod to as gesticulate wildly while firing off party poppers at that other codified tale of same-sex desire, *Midnight Cowboy*.

Eastwood's own reaction to the finished film was, even for a man who rarely reached for his own trumpet, pointedly diffident. He may have been disappointed with the movie's relatively lacklustre box-office performance (he criticised UA's marketing of the film and resolved never to work with them again). And, still bruised from failing to gain an Oscar nomination for his directorial debut, *Play Misty For Me*, Bridges's nomination as Best Supporting Actor, while he was again ignored, apparently rankled. But it's possible he detected in it the possibility of a very different career direction, one that he would consciously forswear. Certainly even the best of his subsequent films, *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and *Unforgiven*, are solidly traditional and narratively conservative, with no trace of the thematic dangers of *Thunderbolt And Lightfoot*, the risk-taking Eastwood apparently having expired to the strains of Paul Williams crooning *Where Do I Go From Here*.

As for Cimino, his death earlier this year provoked much dearly recycled discussion of his twin career lodestars, *The Deer Hunter* and *Heaven's Gate*. But back before all that much-reported hoo-hah it's *Thunderbolt And Lightfoot*, with its theme of wounded men reaching out for connection against the backdrop of a broken country, with its unexpected narrative detours, outbreaks of crazy ebullience and lingering air of tragedy, of promise snuffed out and roads untaken, that really sharpens the sense of loss.

THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT IS OUT NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DOWNLOAD

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Michael Caine appeared in both this 1972 mystery thriller and its 2007 remake (6)
 4 Agrees to form a great high school musical (6)
 9 Filmwise, he took a long walk to freedom (7)
 10 Film that won the Best Picture Oscar in 2006 (5)
 11 Watts who was Diana in 2013 (5)
 12 Sophie, once a resident at Hotel Rwanda (7)
 13 Gemma Arterton played the lead character in this Posy Simmonds adaptation (5,6)
 18 She was twice one of Charlie's angels (4,3)
 20 Sounds like a dance, this Alaska-set John Sayles film (5)
 22 Williams, was he really once cast as Popeye? (5)
 23 Film that linked Marilyn Monroe with "a raging torrent of emotion" (7)
 24 Peter's been turned around for Meryl (6)
 25 This Kirsten Dunst film is also known as *All I Wanna Do* (6)

DOWN

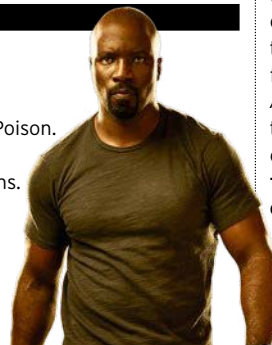
- 1 Rachel Roberts played the title role in this Al Pacino film (6)
 2 Morricone located amid a Sean Penn-Ionesco get-together (5)
 3 Tom Cruise/John Grisham thriller (3,4)
 5 He and his brothers were directed by Luchino Visconti (5)
 6 Isabelle Huppert portrayed an ex-nun in this non-professional-sounding release (7)
 7 *Sleepless In Seattle* director Nora (6)
 8 The fifth in a series but the fourth for Matt Damon (5,6)
 14 _____: *Paradise Lost*, movie starring Benicio Del Toro (7)
 15 In which Ewan McGregor voiced a pigeon (7)
 16 This film introduced Jay and Silent Bob (6)
 17 Danny Aiello and Angelina Jolie's desert moon (6)
 19 Could be Hope, could be Jessica (5)
 21 Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx's city of vice (5)

NOVEMBER ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1 *The BFG*, 4 *Beyond*, 9 Ed Helms, 10 Akira, 11 Ennio, 12 Missing, 13 *Dog Soldiers*, 18 *The Help*, 20 *Frida*, 22 Lloyd, 23 *Airport*, 24 *Stolen* 25 *Poison*.

DOWN: 1 *The Net*, 2 Ethan, 3 *Falcons*, 5 Evans, 6 Olivier, 7 *Django*, 8 *A Simple Plan*, 14 Oyelowo, 15 *Inferno*, 16 *Stills*, 17 Parton, 19 Eddie, 21 Irons.

ANAGRAM MIKE COLTER



GIVEAWAYS

WIN! CAPTAIN FANTASTIC ON DVD

WATCH VIGGO Mortensen take home-schooling to the next level. When we say schooling we actually mean knife-throwing, intense number-crunching and extreme sports. Win on DVD to see what happens when Viggo's kids take their HSC.

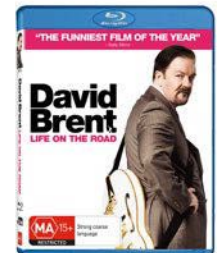
TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE VIGGO MORTENSEN ROLE IS, AND WHY.



WIN! DAVID BRENT: LIFE ON THE ROAD ON BLU-RAY

RICKY GERSHAW'S MOST famous creation has left the confines of the office to head on down the free love highway in search of rock 'n' roll stardom. In Slough. Win one of 10 BDs we have up for grabs to witness David Brent's on-stage antics. It's an embarrassment of riches.

TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE DAVID BRENT MOMENT IS, AND WHY.



WIN! BRIDGET JONES'S BABY ON BLU-RAY

RENÉE ZELLWEGER tries out her dodgy British accent one more time! Now with added McDreamy (Patrick Dempsey) to fight for Bridget's affections with the ever present Mr. Darcy (Colin Firth).

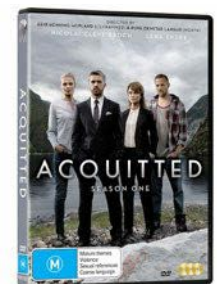
TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE BRITISH ROM-COM IS, AND WHY.



WIN! ACQUITTED ON DVD

WOULD YOU TRUST someone who killed their sweetheart 20 years ago, was acquitted and has now turned up to help save your company? That's exactly the moral dilemma facing the cast of *Acquitted*. Find out what they do by winning one of 10 DVDs.

TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE COURTROOM DRAMA IS, AND WHY.





WIN! SUICIDE SQUAD ON BLU-RAY

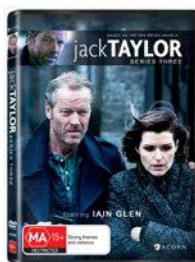
DID YOU WATCH *SUICIDE Squad* at the cinema and think to yourself, "I want more of The Joker?" and "If only Harley Quinn showed up more?" Well win one of 10 extended cut Blu-rays and your wishes will be granted.



TO ENTER, TELL US WHO YOUR FAVOURITE SUICIDE SQUAD MEMBER IS, AND WHY.

WIN! JACK TAYLOR ON DVD

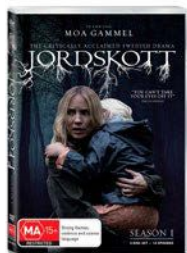
IAIN GLEN PROVES there is life outside *Game Of Thrones* by starring in a show with no dragons. He plays an Irish ex-cop turned P.I. who takes the cases the guards don't want. Don't they all. Ten lucky winners get a DVD.



TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE TV COP SHOW IS, AND WHY.

WIN! JORDSKOTT ON DVD

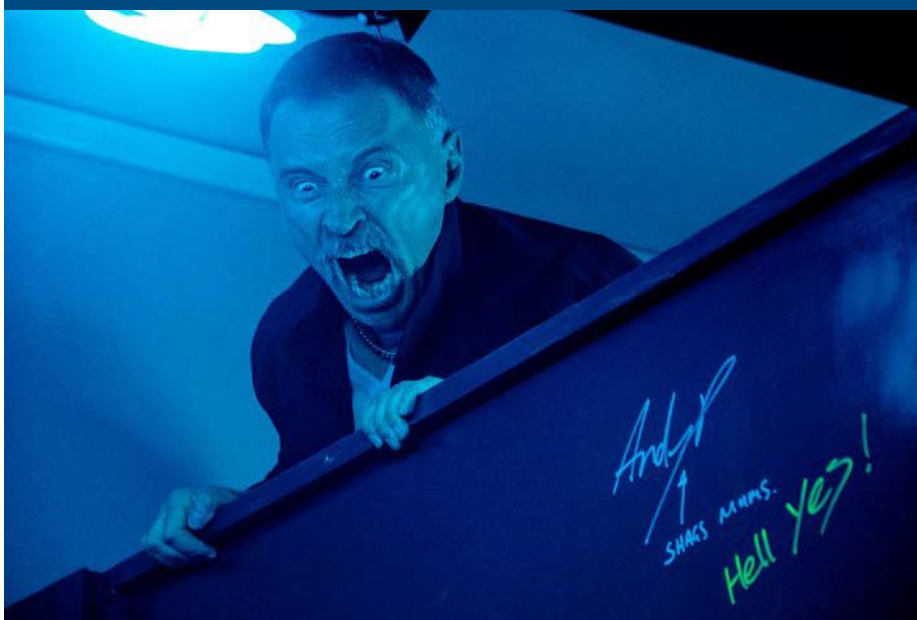
FOLLOWING IN THE Scandi-Noir footsteps of *The Killing* and *The Bridge* comes *Jordskott*, the latest Scandinavian import. A missing persons case that takes the viewer on an emotional rollercoaster ride, 10 lucky winners will have their nerves fried.



TO ENTER, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE SCANDINAVIAN TV SHOW IS, AND WHY.

COMPETITION ENDS JANUARY 11
FOR A CHANCE to win these prizes, email us at empiregiveaways@bauer-media.com.au, write the prize in the subject line, your preferred format if there are both DVD or Blu-ray options and complete the answer in 25 words or less, not forgetting to include your contact details. All competitions are open to both Australian and New Zealander *Empire* readers. For conditions of entry visit www.bauer-media.com.au/terms/competition-terms

CAPTION COMP



WIN!

Write a brilliantly witty caption to the image above from Danny Boyle's long-awaited sequel to *Trainspotting*, once again starring Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle and Kelly Macdonald, and victory will be yours!

T2: TRAINSPOTTING PULLS INTO AUSSIE CINEMAS FROM 2 FEBRUARY, 2017

ONE LUCKY WINNER WILL BE BURNING RUBBER WITH THE MAD MAX HIGH OCTANE COLLECTION ON BLU-RAY INCLUDING THE LONG-AWAITED BLACK & CHROME EDITION! MMMM, SHINY MONOCHROME.



OCTOBER WINNER

"You'll let me borrow that Winnebago? Pinky swear?"

Trent Edwards! You have won *Stir Crazy*, *The Toy* and *See No Evil, Hear No Evil* on Blu-ray!

THE EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

8 MILE CHOSEN BY JASON ISAACS



"There are so many brilliant scenes from the late Curtis Hanson, that most eclectic of directors, but I'm going with the final rap battle of *8 Mile*. The last act is a bravura sequence, beautifully shot, structured and played, where Eminem's Jimmy finally shows us what the fuss has been about for the previous hour-and-a-half. As he lays himself bare, exposes all his secrets and stuns his opponent, it's Jimmy's, Eminem's and all of our stories. And Curtis Hanson proving yet again that there was literally nothing he couldn't do as a director."

INT. THE SHELTER – NIGHT

It's the final of the rap battle. Jimmy (Eminem) faces off against bitter rival Papa Doc (Anthony Mackie). Papa Doc wins the coin toss and insists Jimmy go first. The MC, Future (Mekhi Phifer), cues the beat. Jimmy stares at Papa Doc. Then turns to the crowd.

JIMMY: Now everybody from the 313, Put your motherfucking hands up and follow me, Everybody from the 313 put your motherfucking hands up, look, look, now while he stands tough, Notice that this man did not have his hands up,

This free world got you gassed up,
Now who's afraid of the big bad wolf,
1, 2, 3 and to the 4, 1 pac, 2 pac, 3 pac, 4, 4 pac, 3
pac, 2 pac, 1, you're pac, he's pac, no pacs, none.

This guy ain't no motherfucking MC,
I know everything he's got to say against me,
I am white, I am a fucking bum, I do live in a trailer
with my mom, my boy Future is an Uncle Tom,
I do got a dumb friend named Cheddar Bob who
shoots himself in his leg with his own gun,
I did get jumped by all six of you chumps,
And Wink did fuck my girl, I'm still standing here
screaming, "FUCK THE FREE WORLD!"
Don't ever try to judge me, dude,
You don't know what the fuck I've been through.

But I know something about you,
You went to Cranbrook, that's a private school,
What's the matter, dawg? You embarrassed?
This guy's a gangster? His real name's Clarence.

And Clarence lives at home with both parents,
And Clarence's parents have a real good marriage,
This guy don't wanna battle, he's shook,
'Cause ain't no such things as half-way crooks.
He's scared to death,
He's scared to look in his fucking yearbook,
fuck Cranbrook.

The beat drops out.

Fuck the beat, I go a cappella, fuck a Papa Doc,
fuck a clock, fuck a trailer, fuck everybody
Fuck y'all if you doubt me,
I'm a piece of fucking white trash, I say it proudly.
And fuck this battle, I don't wanna win, I'm outta.
Here, tell these people something they don't
know about me.

He throws the mic to Papa Doc. The crowd goes wild. Papa Doc stands there, stunned.

FUTURE: Papa Doc! What you gonna do? DJ! DJ!
A minute-and-a-half. Spin that shit! Spin
that shit!

The DJ lays down a beat. Papa Doc lifts the microphone to his lips.

PAPA DOC: Yo.

He looks at the crowd, who chant at him. Papa Doc hands the mic to Future, conceding defeat.

FUTURE: Oh, oh, oh, oh, we got a new champion!
We got a new champion! 313! 313!

The crowd chants as Jimmy celebrates.

REAL DETECTIVE

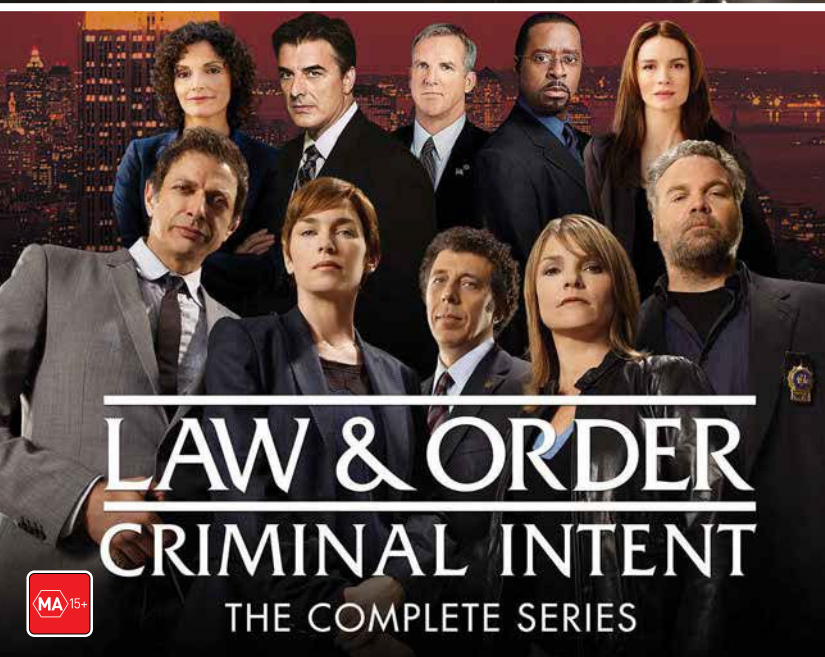
REAL CRIME. REAL DRAMA.

SEASON ONE

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